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HEADLANDS OF FAITH:

A Series of Dissertations

ON THE

CARDINAL TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE

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Nashville, Tenn.:

PUBLISHED BY E. STEVENSON & J. E. EVANS, AGENTS,
FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

1856. *o*

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STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY A. A. STITT,
SOUTHERN METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE, NASHVILLE, TENN.

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Preface.

THE aim of this volume is to develop, in a popular manner, "the truth as it is in Jesus;" uniting, in due proportion, the *credenda* and the *agenda* of Christianity. The papers of which it is composed had their origin, chiefly, in the author's earlier theological studies and pulpit preparations. A few of them are of later production. Two have been published before, but through a medium of limited circulation. The work is now given to the world, in humble reliance upon the Divine blessing for its success. It is an unambitious book, free from egotism and from pedantry, and simple alike in logic and in rhetoric. It is hoped that the volume contains nothing contrary to sound doctrine, or unfriendly to evangelical piety. If the author dogmatizes, it is only where there is no room for doubting. If he "contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," it is in

kindness and charity—not for the glory of conquest, but for the honor of the truth. If he has succeeded in illustrating the attributes and government of God—if he has made plainer to the inquiring soul the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer—if he has contributed to render the cross of Christ more precious, and the duties of religion more attractive, to any of his readers—if he has shed one ray of light upon the dark path of a weary and sorrowful pilgrimage, or mingled one drop of comfort in the wormwood cup which so many of his brethren are called to drink—he has accomplished his object, and secured his reward.

J. C.

CHARLESTON, S. C., May 15, 1856.

HEADLANDS OF FAITH.

I.—THE SUPREME EXISTENCE.

THE doctrine of a Supreme First Cause and Sole Governor of the universe lies at the foundation of all religion. He who denies it has no religion. "Without God," he is equally "without hope in the world," an orphan in a fatherless universe, whose only consolation lies in his boasted fraternity with the worm that perisheth. It shall be our business to exhibit some evidence of the Supreme Existence.

I. Our first argument is drawn from THE GENERAL CONSENT OF MANKIND.

"There is one God." This great truth, and beginning of truths, has been an article of common, almost universal belief, from the infancy of the world. There never was a nation of atheists, and always and everywhere the individual atheist has been regarded as a monster. What does this prove? That the common sense of mankind, with a little reflection, leads to the idea of a God; that the fact is obvious, or the thought natural, to the human mind. Thus general consent furnishes a strong probability of the Supreme Existence.

But most nations, it may be urged, believe in many

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gods, instead of one. This, however, weighs nothing against the argument. Polytheists do not reject the truth to embrace an error: only hold an error in connection with the truth. They believe in many subordinate gods; but they do not repudiate the faith in One Supreme God. The faith in One Supreme God has been general, in all nations, in all ages.

How does this happen? It must be either deduced from evidence, or derived from tradition, or impressed by some superior power upon the human soul. If deduced from evidence, that evidence must be sufficient to warrant the deduction, and it is highly irrational to reject the doctrine. If derived from tradition, that tradition must have had an origin, and that origin may have been an immediate revelation of God to man. If impressed by some superior power upon the human soul, that power must be capable of producing the same thought in millions of minds, simultaneously in all lands, and continuously through all time; and what can that power be, less than an omnipresent and almighty being—God himself, with his own finger, writing his name upon the universal heart of man?

Thus, on any hypothesis, the general consent of mankind supplies a very strong presumption of the Supreme Existence. This presumption is supported by other and ampler evidence.

II. Our second argument is drawn from THE MORAL CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

I am conscious of moral character, and of moral obligation. These imply moral law and moral government. Law supposes a lawgiver: government, a governor. If, then, I possess a moral nature, I must have a moral ruler. Who is this moral ruler, but God?

Again: I carry within me a moral principle which I call conscience—an inward monitor, which speaks, “as one

having authority," of the good or ill of my conduct. Its warnings and reproofs reverberate through the depths of my soul, and I tremble as before a stern judicial tribunal. This internal sense of right and wrong is the standard by which I try myself, acquit or condemn myself, independently of all human opinions. Whence comes it? What is it? Can there be any phenomenon, in psychology any more than in physics, without a cause? Is it a law written in my heart? then, who is the lawgiver? Is it a government established in my soul? then, who is the governor? Is it a tribunal erected in my consciousness? then, who is the judge? What is my conscience, but my nature's announcement of a God?

Once more: I am happy in the exercise of virtuous affections: I am unhappy in the indulgence of vicious ones. I speak not now of the satisfaction or the remorse which follows; for these are the sanctions with which conscience enforces her dictates, and they constitute an integral part of her testimony for God. But I speak of a present pleasure, distinct from the retrospective complacency; and of a present pain, distinct from the retrospective self-reproach. There is an immediate sweetness in the exercise of a benevolent feeling, and an immediate bitterness in the indulgence of a malevolent one. The same is true of all other virtues and vices. It is not the mere consciousness of integrity and honor which constitutes the happiness, nor the mere sense of self-degradation and demerit which constitutes the unhappiness; but there is in the virtuous feeling or action itself an inward and heavenly satisfaction, and in the vicious feeling or action a painful want of harmony with all that is pure and good. So it is with reference to the practice of temperance and sobriety, on the one hand; and the ignoble subjection of soul and body to a tyrannical appetite, on the other. If I wield a mastery over all my inferior tendencies, I enjoy an unspeakable divine serenity; if I yield myself to the

anarchy of my evil passions, I am like the troubled sea that cannot rest. In the tranquil felicity of the good affections, I possess a present reward: in the turbulent disorder of the bad affections, I experience a present vengeance. What is the inference? That I am under the moral control of a being who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and who makes my own interior consciousness notify me perpetually of his presence and his preference. Who is this being but God?

Thus, without any other argument than that furnished by my own moral constitution, I am convinced of the existence of a Supreme Moral Ruler, to whom I am accountable for my conduct. This doctrine is a dictate of my moral nature, of which I find it difficult—even impossible—to divest myself. Other men possess the same consciousness: it is equally a dictate of their moral nature. Therefore, if my moral nature has not deceived me—if a sentiment, so general and ineradicable that it appears to be interwoven with the very texture of our being, has not led us all astray—there must be a moral law-giver, governor, and judge—publishing his statutes, asserting his dominion, erecting his tribunal, in man's interior nature; and if man existed alone, as a pure spirituality, without this solid earth and these surrounding heavens to teach him, his own soul, as an oracle, would give forth distinct and authoritative announcements of a God; and perhaps, when properly considered, all your academic demonstrations, *à priori* and *à posteriori*, are less weighty and convincing than these inward notices of a Supreme Ruler, who is of all virtue the patron, and of all vice the avenger.

III. Our third argument is drawn from THE EXISTENCE OF THE UNIVERSE, AND ITS MANIFEST INDICATIONS OF DESIGN.

“The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that

are made—even his eternal power and Godhead.” So wrote the apostle to the Romans; so, substantially, he preached to the Athenians; and so we may reason with the speculative atheist; and perhaps, with the great mass of minds, the physical argument may carry more weight than either the historical or the psychological.

I know that I exist, and that my existence had a beginning. I know that I did not originate my own existence, but am descended from a race similar to myself. This race is composed of a series of individuals: a series implies a first; therefore there must have been a first man. How did this first man originate? By his own agency, or by some other agency? Certainly not by his own, for then he must have acted before he existed. And if not his own creator, he is certainly the creature of another, and that other is God.

I see a universe of existences around me. All must have had a commencement: all must have had a cause. What was that cause? Evidently not their own agency. Causation implies action: action supposes existence; and to say that a thing acted before it existed, is in effect to say that it existed and did not exist at the same time. Further: If the beings which I behold around me acted before they existed, so as to produce their own existence, why may they not have acted before they existed to produce other existences? and if they acted one moment before they existed, why may they not have acted a thousand centuries before; or be acting now, and not exist for millions of ages to come; or continue to act for ever, and never exist at all? Self-origination is the greatest of all absurdities. Every thing that is not eternal must have had a cause. What is that cause, but the Uncreated Eternal?

But it is chiefly in the evidence of design, exhibited in the adaptation of means to ends, indicating the operation of vast intelligence and wondrous wisdom, that the universe

“holds forth to palpable observation the insignia of its origin.” If the construction of a house suggests the idea of an architect—if the mechanism of a watch argues the agency of an artificer—because they display design, adaptation, and utility;—much more does the universe, with its infinite variety of parts and uses, with its countless exhibitions of orderly and beneficial collocation, speak the master mind of a great and intelligent designer. Why are the eyelashes placed just where they should be, to protect that most delicate organ? Why are the nails fixed precisely where they are needful, instead of protruding as excrescences on other parts of the body? Why are the fingers and thumbs located upon the hand in the only mutual relations which could possibly answer the purposes of grasping and holding? Why are the cutters and grinders so arranged in the mouth, that their order could not be reversed without rendering them comparatively useless, and seriously embarrassing the process of mastication? We might multiply indefinitely these demands. There are innumerable collocations, dispositions, adaptations, observable among the teeming objects around us—organic and inorganic—celestial and terrestrial—animal and vegetable—mental and physical—all of which are of incalculable utility, all of which are indispensable to human comfort, many of which are essential even to life, and none of which could ever have occurred without the agency of an intelligent cause. From the simplest ascertained laws and relations of the mighty orbs above, to the most complex and inscrutable connections and dependences known to obtain among the manifold parts and multiplied functions of humbler life below, behold we not all nature instinct with the mind of a great designer—teeming and alive with evidences of a Divine Originator?

But the atheist imagines the universe, with all its complicated and wondrous machinery, with all its relations of adaptation and utility, to exist in an infinite series of events,

without an origin and without a cause. But an infinite series is an infinite absurdity. Every dependent event supposes an independent cause, either immediate or remote. Can you conceive of a suspended chain without an absolute and primary support? Impossible. Whatever the number of dependent links, there must be, above all, an independent support. Equally inconceivable is an infinite series of dependent events. The multiplication of the events does not help the difficulty. However great the number—though beyond all imaginable number—there must be a first, and that first must be connected with an Eternal Cause.

The present generation of animals and vegetables, the atheist tells us, is the product of a preceding generation, and that of another, and so on to infinity. But suppose we trace the series back through a thousand millions of generations, what does it amount to, except the removal of the difficulty farther into the past? There is no solution, no satisfaction, no resting-place for the mind. Carry up the succession as far as you please—as far as the toiling calculation of a thousand years, multiplied by all their included moments, can bear you—but you shall find no point on which to pause, till you come to a cause which is itself uncaused and eternal.

Driven from this vagary, the atheist admits that all things had a beginning; but ascribes that beginning to chance, as if chance were a causative agency. But if chance produced all things at the first, why does it not continue to produce? If chance produced the primary generation of plants, trees, beasts, birds, and men, why has it never produced another? How happened it to do what it could not repeat? Why are all things in nature now propagated in regular and established methods? Why is there not a single exception, within all the range of our knowledge? If chance produced the human eye, why not a telescope? If chance produced the solar system, why not a planetarium? If chance produced the

stellar universe, why not a temple, a steamship, or a spinning-wheel?

But we must attach definite ideas to terms. What, then, is this chance, to which the origin of all things is referred? It is either nothing or something. If nothing, how could nothing produce something—produce every thing? If something, and something adequate to the effects ascribed to it, then the doctrine of causality must be admitted, and chance becomes but another name for God.

But chance is neither a cause, nor the negation of a cause. When we say an event happens by chance, we mean not that a cause is wanting, but that the cause is unknown. We cast up a coin, and say that its falling with this or that side up is by chance. We do not mean that the result is without a cause. We know that it depends upon the impulse which the coin receives from the hand; its position and direction when it begins to descend; and the uniformity or diversity, stillness or motion, of the medium through which it passes. There is no event without its cause in the whole series—no uncertainty, except what arises from our ignorance; and the only reason why the result cannot be foreseen, is simply that we are unable to calculate the influence of the combined causes which originate and regulate the motion.

Two men buy lottery tickets: one draws a prize, and the other a blank. This is chance; yet every thing in the operation is perfectly mechanical, and every event has an adequate cause. With precisely the same association of causes, precisely the same results would be realized a thousand times in succession; and but for our ignorance of the various agencies and influences uniting to produce the effect, the success or failure of a thousand successive adventures might be infallibly foretold.

Two ships, sailing at the same time from different European ports, arrive at once in your harbor. This too is

chance; but we can easily account for the coincidence. Either the distances were equal, and the vessels sailed with precisely the same speed; or the distances were unequal, and the speed of one vessel exceeded that of the other exactly in the same proportion. In either case, they must infallibly reach their destination together; and the result is said to be by chance, only because the comparative distance of the two ports, and the comparative speed of the two vessels, are unknown to us.

Thus, when we attribute an event to chance, we mean simply that we are unacquainted with the agency or the manner of its production. This is the common acceptance of the term. Now, if this is the meaning of the atheist—if he intends to say that he does not understand the origin of the universe—that the agency and the manner of its creation are to him and to all men inscrutable and incomprehensible—so far there is no ground of controversy, no incompatibility of opinion. But if by chance he means something else—if he uses the word in a sense different from its ordinary signification—then he is bound to give us a precise definition, to tell us distinctly what new and unheard-of meaning he attaches to the term; and till he does this, his theory is unworthy of our notice—cannot be refuted, because it cannot be apprehended—cannot be controverted, because it cannot be understood.

Forced to abandon this ground, the atheist seeks refuge in another vagary, equally unsatisfactory and absurd—ascribes all things to the laws of nature. But what are the laws of nature? The regular and established order of sequence in which things proceed in the natural world—the invariable method which obtains in all the known phenomena of the universe. But these laws must not be confounded with the cause in which the events originate. It is not the laws that produce the effects, but some power acting agreeably to the

laws. It is not the law that punishes the criminal, but the officer acting according to the law. The cases are parallel. The laws of nature suppose a Lord of nature, in whose will they originate, and of whose procedure they constitute the ordinary and established method. There can be no creation without motion, and no motion without power; that power must reside in an agent, and that agent must be either created or uncreated; if created, his creator may be eternal, and if uncreated, he must be himself eternal; so that the atheist finds himself shut up to the necessity of admitting a cause who is uncaused—a producer who is unproduced—an agent without an original—a being without a beginning.

“But hold!” cries he: “Are there not certain appetences, affections, or tendencies in matter, which might be found sufficient, could we thoroughly understand them, to account for all the various phenomena observable in earth and heaven? Take, for instance, the process of crystallization. Here is a fluid of certain ingredients, in which particles are found moving in all directions to a particular point, and there uniting in admirable order, forming a solid and regular body, with sides and angles well defined; and you may repeat the experiment, with exactly the same result, a thousand times in succession. Is not this a specimen of the inherent power of matter; and supposing matter already existent—existent from eternity—may not the same laws, operating on a larger scale, have produced the beautiful collocations and harmonious movements of universal nature?”

Avast! Matter has no more faculty of self-motion than of self-creation. It is contrary to all human experience. Who ever saw a rock or a tree transport itself from one locality to another? What mountain ever walked the continent, or leaped into the ocean? Yet, if a solitary particle of matter could move itself from the side of a glass vessel to the centre, why could not a mountain, which is only an assemblage of

particles, move itself to another hemisphere, or to another planet?

The self-moving power of matter is utterly inconceivable. Our very idea of motion implies a moving agent, distinct from the subject moved. In the motion of my arm, is it the arm that moves itself, or I that move it? Evidently, the latter. The mind is the motor: the muscle, only the instrument. The motor must feel desire, and exercise volition—qualities which no sane mind can ascribe to matter. When particles unite to form a crystal or a plant, they are not so many independent agents, actuated by an affection for each other; but mere passive subjects, acted upon by some external force, as really as the wheel is turned by the water, or the leaf wafted by the wind. Physical attraction and repulsion, combination and dissolution, accretion and decay—what are they, but the direct operation of a superior power upon matter, in certain uniform methods, which we call the laws of nature? and to ascribe to these laws all the phenomena—the vast and the minute—which we behold about us—what is it, but to suppose the universe the effect of causes, which are themselves the effects of another cause, and that the Almighty and Eternal?

The phenomena of nature include the phenomena of mind. There is an inner world, as well as an outer world; and the inner is more wonderful than the outer. Suppose we admit that all the physical forms and appearances with which we are familiar result merely from the laws of matter; but how are we to account for the faculties, affections, and operations of the conscious and rational soul? Here is a case for which the atheistic hypothesis contains no provision. Can its advocate tell us what law of nature produces thought, reason, reflection, volition, or memory? He does not know. Nay, does he know that they are produced by any law of nature? Does he know even that the visible and tangible substances

and qualities which constitute the external universe are produced by the laws of nature? What is his theory of the laws of nature, but a blind conjecture—an insane and sacrilegious presumption—the blasphemous expedient of a desperate depravity for robbing the Almighty Maker of his glory, and exiling the Universal Sovereign from his throne?

Away with these vagaries of atheistical philosophy! Who that pretends to the power of reasoning, and possesses the least degree of candor, can survey the field of evidence over which we have glanced, and question the Supreme Existence?

“There is one God.” All things are full of him. There is no part of his universe where his footsteps are not traced. His goodness blooms in every flower: his glory beams from every star. The bird sings to him among the branches, and the cricket answers “Hallelujah” from the hearth. The loud chanting of the storm, and the solemn anthem of the sea, mingle with the music of the spheres, in praise of his adorable perfections. Every vegetable production, “from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,” furnishes a specimen of his handiwork and a proof of his providence. Every material substance, from the atom to the orb—every animate existence, from the insect to the angel—proclaims his eternal being and his exhaustless bounty. His presence enfolds us like the atmosphere. The breeze is his breath, the sunshine his smile, the tempest his frown, the lightning his glance, the thunder his voice, the earthquake his tread. “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” It is his Spirit that heaves the lungs, propels the blood along its mysterious channels, kindles the vital heat which pervades the animal system, and inspires with understanding the quick and conscious soul.

Such and so ample are the evidences of his existence, that none of the sacred writers has attempted its demonstration, or even deemed its formal statement necessary. The Bible

opens with an announcement of his creative energy in the production of the heavens and the earth. Moses makes no allusion to atheism, and there is no evidence of that blasphemous species of unbelief in the early ages of the world. On the contrary, the belief in a Supreme God seems to have been common to all nations and countries. The inference is natural, that it was a truth revealed to the first human pair, transmitted by tradition from generation to generation, and never in any instance questioned, till, with the increase of human depravity and impiety, men, from dreading, began at first to doubt, and at length waxed bold enough to deny, what had been from the beginning a matter of universal faith.

Infinite is the audacity of atheism. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Who but a fool would utter such a sentiment? Who but a fool would deny what all men know intuitively to be true—that every effect must have a cause? Who but a fool would believe that a watch grew by chance upon a tree, or was formed like a pebble by the action of the waves? Who but a fool would imagine that the materials of this house were wafted together by the wind, and arranged themselves in their respective places fortuitously, without design, and without a designer? Who but a fool would suppose that the stories of the heavens were built without an architect, and all the vast and complicated machinery of nature, with its manifold beauty, and majestic symmetry, and marvellous harmony, was constructed without an artificer, and put in motion without power?

Hear that animalcule, which, with millions of its fellows, finds a world in a crumb of cheese, or an ocean in a drop of water, proclaiming that there is no such personage in existence as Queen Victoria—that he has thoroughly investigated the subject, and found the common belief utterly delusive, and unworthy of any one's credence. Such is the folly of the atheist—nay, infinitely greater. Shut up in this little

corner of creation, bearing no more proportion to the whole than a sand-grain to the globe—not knowing a millionth part of the facts and the phenomena of his own insignificant sphere, nor capable even of comprehending his own puny faculties—he rashly undertakes to deny the Supreme Existence.

Atheism cannot adduce a particle of evidence in its support. It is contradicted by the hues of flowers, and the scintillations of stars; rebuked by the breath of zephyrs, and the song of birds; and pronounced anathema by a whole universe of witnesses. The atheist stands in the midst of God's great temple, upon his very footstool, before his throne; and, looking up into the face of God, declares, "There is no God."

If aught can excite mirth in hell, it must be the exhibition of such madness on earth. If devils ever laugh, it must be at the folly and temerity of the atheist. He repudiates all evidence, all reason, all truth. His unbelief is the result, not of ignorance, but of wickedness—unmitigated and inexcusable wickedness. It is not the error of the head, but the depravity of the heart. He says there is no God, because he wants no God. He hates God, would dethrone God, and bereave all being of its Father. He would rather be an orphan in an orphaned universe, than have a God whom his evil nature and his guilty conduct oblige him to hate for his holiness and dread for his justice.

"No God!" How miserable the man of such a creed! a planet without a sun! no light, nor life, nor breath, nor bloom! the past all an enigma, the present all an illusion, and the future an everlasting night! The last hour—the last agony—is upon him. No seraph chanting thrills his dying ear, nor cherub pinions hover about his pallid clay. No star of hope gleams over the opening grave, nor voice of friendship from beyond salutes the departing soul. Only the worms rise up to greet their brother, as he descends to their cold companionship; and silence, and darkness, and sad incerti-

tude, close over him like nightfall. Ah! well, if, amid that fearful gloom, come not the laugh of fiends, and the wail of ruined souls!

“No God!” O, maddest thought of man, and madder than was ever breathed by demons! France uttered the lie, and Vengeance wrote its refutation in blood. The fool still utters it in his heart, and every throb of that heart rebukes the blasphemy.

“No God!” Then, what are we all but shadows? Nay, worse than shadows—conscious atoms, floating in an eternal chaos; and our superiority to the worm is only a superior capacity of wretchedness—a superior certainty of woe.

“No God!” Then weep, O earth! and wail, ye heavens! and lift, all creatures, the voice of lamentation! for ye sit in a charnel, and worship a chimera; and this universe is a vast Juggernaut, of which the wheels are worlds, and men the victims. Grind on, ye spheres! for we are fatherless!

But the worst form of atheism—the most real and the most criminal—is practical atheism. To believe that there is a God, and not tremble at the thought of him—to believe that he is the universal sovereign, and offer him no service nor homage—to believe that his tender mercies are over all his works, and raise no song of gratitude or praise—to believe that he scrutinizes our conduct, and will bring every thought into judgment, and yet disregard his notice, and go boldly forward, unpardoned and impenitent, toward the “great white throne”—O! this is a thousand times more awful than stupidly to mistake the furnished demonstration of his existence, and blasphemously to enthrone chance in his holy temple! This, however, is the atheism which has always been most prevalent among men. Few deny that there is a God; but how many live as if there were none! “God is not in all their thoughts.” What they verbally acknowledge, they practically ignore. In the storm, and on the sick-bed,

and around the graves of friends, they may think of God, and tremble, and pray; but in the ordinary affairs and circumstances of life—in the pursuits of business and pleasure—he is utterly disregarded and forgotten—neither loved nor feared, invoked nor praised. Miserable men! “without God” in such a world as this! stumbling upon the dark mountains, and no light to guide them! wandering in slippery places, and no hand to uphold them! rushing along the brink of the precipice, and no arm outstretched between them and destruction! Alas! where is their strength in adversity, their help in the time of trouble, their consolation amid the sorrows of life, and their sustaining hope when the eye grows dim in death? Ah! what will they do, or whither look for help, when the last dread storm shall force them from their moorings, and drive them out, helmless and dismantled, upon the sea of eternity?

II.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

THAT God is one, is equally a dictate of reason and a doctrine of Revelation. The unity of nature—the mutual dependence of its several parts, and the perfect harmony of its various movements—prove the production and government of the universe the work of one Omnific Agency—of one Almighty Sovereignty. The Holy Scriptures declare emphatically that “There is one God,” that “He is God alone,” that “There is none else,” “none with him,” “none like him,” “none beside him,” “none before him.” But in connection with the Unity of the Divine Essence, they teach that there is a Trinity of Divine Persons. Tri-personality may appear incompatible with essential unity; but it is for us to believe what the Scriptures reveal, without attempting to comprehend a philosophy which lies above the range of our reason. There is no difficulty in the doctrine, except what originates in unwarrantable and presumptuous speculation. There is a Father, and there is a Son, and there is a Spirit—is there any thing contradictory here? The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Spirit is God—is there any thing contradictory here? The Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, are in some manner, which we need not understand, and which we cannot scrutinize, one God—is there any thing contradictory even here? There is mystery, indeed; but just because the finite cannot compass the infinite. How should the human worm, incapable of explaining the thou-

sandth part of his own puny thought or feeble frame, aspire to so sublime a philosophy as that which concerns the mode of the Divine Subsistence? There is incomprehensibility; but there is no contradiction. We are required to believe, not that there are three Gods in one God, or three persons in one person; but that there are three “Adorable Distinctions”—call them persons if you please—in one Adorable Nature.

For proof of this sublime mystery of our faith, we depend entirely upon the Word of God. Nature and Providence afford clear and unequivocal indications of the Divine Existence, and some of the Divine Perfections; but of the Divine Tri-personality, Nature and Providence have never spoken. The perfect unity—moral and essential—of the three persons in the Godhead precludes all possibility of any discrepancy of views and operations in the creation and government of the universe. The universe, therefore, speaks much of a God, but says nothing of a Trinity. For information of the latter we repair to another oracle—the written Revelation of Heaven. We need not expect, however, to find, even here, such evidence as shall effectually prevent all cavilling and evasion; for there is no revealed truth which has not been obscured and perverted by human ignorance and presumption; and such a revelation would be incompatible with the moral government of God, and the moral agency of man. But if the doctrine is true and fundamental, its announcement will doubtless be found as distinct, and its development as broad, as is the case with reference to other fundamental truths in the Holy Volume; and its accumulated evidence—from explicit statement and rational deduction—sufficient to satisfy the mind of any honest and candid inquirer. Such, we think, is the evidence afforded; and planting our faith in the recorded fact, and rejoicing in its connection with our salvation as sinners, we cheerfully consent to postpone the consideration of its philosophy till we become seraphs.

I. The Scriptures indicate A PLURALITY IN THE GODHEAD.

In proof of this we refer to the very first verse of Genesis. "In the beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth." *Elohim* is the plural, of which *Eloah* is the singular; and the plural noun is connected with a singular verb, as if to convey the idea of plurality in unity.

Bara Elohim—"Gods created"—occurs above thirty times in the brief account of the creation. *Jehovah Elohim*—"The Lord thy Gods"—occurs more than a hundred times in the Pentateuch; the former term expressing unity, the latter plurality. The plural—*Elohim*—is found no less than two thousand and five hundred times in the Old Testament; the singular—*Eloah*—only about sixty.

Look at a few more instances. "And Jacob called the name of the place *El-beth-el*, because *Elohim* there appeared unto him."* "Jehovah our *Elohim* is our Jehovah."† "Ye cannot serve Jehovah, for he is the holy *Elohim*."‡ "What one nation is like thy people Israel, whom *Elohim* went to redeem for a people to himself?"§ "Know ye that Jehovah he is *Elohim*."|| "Hold not thy peace, O *Elohim* of my praise."¶ In all these places the name is plural, and its verbs and pronouns are singular, as if the inspired writers intended to express plurality in unity.

Other names of God are often used in the plural. *El* is *Elim*, *Abir* is *Abirim*, and *Adon* is *Adonim*. *Adonai* and *Shaddai* are also said, on the authority of Eichhorn, Dru-sius, Gesenius, and other eminent Hebraists, to be plural in signification. In Job we read literally—"None saith, Where is God my Makers?" in Ecclesiastes—"Remember now thy Creators in the days of thy youth;" in Isaiah—"Thy Makers is thy husband."

* Gen. xxxv. 7.

† Deut. vi. 4.

‡ Josh. xxiv. 19.

§ 2 Sam. ii. 23.

|| Ps. c. 3.

¶ Ps. cix. 1.

But we forbear. Such instances are very numerous, and must be allowed due weight in the argument. The Scriptures constantly affirm that there is only one God; and we know not how to account for the plural names applied, without supposing him to exist in a plurality of persons. There was no necessity in the language, for the terms have their singulars; nor is the use of the plural for the individual an idiom of the Hebrew tongue. The very nature of the Mosaic religion interposed objections to it—objections which could be overcome only by the stronger reason of a plurality of persons in the Deity. The leading principle of that system was, That God is One—a principle reiterated throughout the Pentateuch, and guarded by the whole ceremonial law. The surrounding nations were polytheists, and the Hebrews themselves had become notoriously addicted to idolatry. The Mosaic theology and ritual aimed expressly to counteract this tendency. The first command, on the entrance of Israel into the promised land, was the unsparing destruction of every thing that could betray them into the aboriginal polytheism. In view of all this, how are we to account for the employment of terms, by the inspired Hebrew writers, implying a plurality in the Godhead, if no such plurality exists?

But there are other scriptural indications of such a plurality.

“God said, Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness.”* Here the personal pronoun is used three times in the plural form. How is this to be explained? Are we to believe that God speaks to the angels? This is mere conjecture, and a very unreasonable one. The persons addressed are not mere spectators, but actual coöperators in the work of creation; and who will dare ascribe such power to the angels?

“The Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.”†

* Gen. i. 26.

† Gen. iii. 22.

This is very remarkable, and seems obviously to imply a plurality of Divine Persons. To suppose that God addresses the angels, is to make him rank himself with his creatures; for he addresses his equals, and includes himself.

“Let us go down, and there confound their language.”* Can this be the mere *pluralis excellentiæ*, as employed by human monarchs? No human monarchs had yet existed when God uttered the words. No such figurative form of expression was in use when Moses wrote. It was not the style of the Old Testament kings of later times. It is more likely that man has stolen it from God, than that God has borrowed it from man. There is no explanation, except on the admission of the supposed plurality.

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”† Here is one person addressing another. The apostle quotes the passage, and informs us that it is the language of God the Father to God the Son.‡

“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.”§ Here is David’s Lord addressed by *Jehovah*. From the apostle we learn that this also is the language of the Eternal Father to his Co-Eternal Son.||

“I heard the voice of *Jehovah*, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”¶ Here *Jehovah* speaks as if there were others associated with him in commissioning the messenger.

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! for lo, I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.”** Here

* Gen. xi. 7. † Ps. xlv. 6, 7. ‡ Heb. i. 8. § Ps. cx. 1.
 || Heb. i. 13. ¶ Isa. vi. 8. ** Zech. ii. 10, 11.

is *Jehovah* coming to dwell in Zion, and he is sent by *Jehovah* of hosts.

These passages are inexplicable and unintelligible, unless there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead.

II. The Scriptures further teach us that THIS PLURALITY IS A TRIAD.

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."* This is the form of blessing which God prescribed for his ancient people. The repetition of the Divine name is very remarkable, and was thought by the Jews themselves to intimate the doctrine of the Trinity. The Rabbis say that for this reason the three parts of the benediction were pronounced with three different accents, the priest all the while holding up three fingers.

"And they cried one to another, saying—Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts."† Such is the song of the seraphim in the prophet's vision. The thrice-uttered "Holy" has been understood, by both Jews and Christians, to indicate the doctrine of the Divine Tri-Personality.

"Come ye near unto me; hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now, the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me."‡ It is thought that the last clause of this quotation should be rendered—"the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit." Whichever version is the more correct, there are certainly three persons presented—"the Lord God," "His Spirit," and the Speaker, who affirms of himself an independent and eternal existence, though he is commissioned by "the Lord God." Is not this the Son, sent by the Father, and attended by the Holy Ghost?

* Num. vi. 24-26.

† Isa. vi. 3.

‡ Isa. xlviii. 16.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying—This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* Here are three persons—Christ ascending from the water, the Holy Ghost descending and lighting upon him, and God the Father speaking from heaven in acknowledgment of his Son.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”† Baptism is the sign and the seal of the “new and everlasting covenant;” and should be administered, of course, in the name of God, the author of that covenant. But Christ here directs the apostles to administer it “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” therefore we conclude that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are God; in other words, that God subsists in a three-fold personality, under these three distinct titles. Who can believe that men are to be baptized in the name of God, and of a creature, and of an attribute? Some of the Christian Fathers—Ambrose, Tertullian, Basil, and Jerome—tell us that the primitive Christian converts were thrice baptized, though the baptism was considered but one; and that this was intended to represent the mystery of the Trinity in Unity.

“If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”‡ Our blessed Lord here promises his own presence, and the presence of his Father, as a perpetual privilege, to the faithful. But other places in this same chapter teach us that the promise is to be fulfilled in the advent of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth; whom the Father shall send in his name, to dwell in them, and abide with them for ever;

* Mat. iii. 16, 17.

† Mat. xxviii. 19.

‡ John xiv. 23.

teaching them all things, and bringing all his own words to their remembrance.*

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”† This is a prayer. Prayer is to be offered only to God; but here is an inspired man praying to God, and to Christ, and to the Holy Ghost; and they are all three equally addressed in the prayer, without any intimation of inferiority in any one of them; and the prayer certainly supposes in each a knowledge of our needs, and an ability to supply them; and the conclusion is logically legitimate, that the Son and the Spirit are not mere attributes, or emanations, or subordinate agents, of the Father; but his coëqual, coëssential, coëternal fellows.

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.”‡ In this passage, God the Father is described by a periphrasis taken from his attribute of eternity; God the Son is designated by his own proper names and mediatorial relations; while God the Holy Ghost is denoted by the “Seven Spirits,” seven being a sacred and mystical number, and used here to signify excellence and perfection, or perhaps because the epistle is addressed “to the seven Churches which are in Asia.” “Grace and peace” are invoked from these three Divine Persons, jointly and equally; from which it is to be inferred, that they are alike able to dispense these blessings, that they unite and concur in communicating good, that neither of them acts without both the others, and that they constitute together the One God, who is the only source of “grace and peace,” and the only proper object of prayer.

* John xiv. 16, 17, 26.

† 2 Cor. 13, 14.

‡ Rev. i. 4, 5.

Probably the strongest, clearest, fullest, most explicit statement of this doctrine contained in the whole Bible is that remarkable passage of St. John :* "There are three that bear record in heaven—The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." The genuineness of this text has been doubted, indeed, because it is wanting in the Syriac, and in several other ancient versions. But we ought not to surrender it without conclusive evidence of its spuriousness; and, as Robert Hall remarks, such evidence has never been adduced. Bengelius, whom John Wesley pronounces "the most pious, judicious and laborious of all the modern commentators of the New Testament," for some time regarded it as an interpolation; but upon more thorough investigation of the matter, was satisfied that it ought not to be rejected. Mr. Wesley himself considers it genuine, and founds upon it his admirable sermon on The Trinity. Its advocates allege in its favor, that many of the versions in which it is wanting are defective in other places; that the Syriac lacks the Apocalypse, and three of the Epistles; that it is cited by many ancient writers, from the time of St. John to the time of Constantine, which could not have been the case if it were not then in the Canon; that its being wanting in many copies after that time is easily accounted for, by the fact that Constantine's successor was a zealous Arian, who would not scruple to expunge such a passage from all the copies that fell into his hands; and that its connection, and the grammatical construction of the original, require its insertion, and furnish strong internal evidence of its genuineness. These considerations ought to be satisfactory; and this point established, the doctrine of The Trinity is placed beyond question or cavil. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive any

* 1 John v. 7.

construction of language to express the idea with greater propriety and perspicuity.

Other scriptures might be adduced. The passages of the New Testament are very numerous in which two other persons besides the Father are distinctly mentioned : one called the Word or the Son, and the other called the Spirit or Holy Ghost ; both honored with Divine names and titles, invested with Divine attributes and prerogatives, performing the appropriate and peculiar works of God, and conjoined with the Father as the proper objects of invocation and praise. As if to indicate their essential equality, they are mentioned in every possible order :—Father, Son and Spirit ; Son, Father and Spirit ; Spirit, Father and Son ; Father, Spirit and Son ; Son, Spirit and Father ; Spirit, Son and Father. Were the writers of this volume Divinely inspired ? Wrote they as the amanuenses of Heaven ? Spake they as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ? Then there is verity in their statements, accuracy in their representations ; and if they speak of a Triad in the Deity, and still maintain the Oneness of his Nature, the doctrine of A Trinity in Unity is the inevitable deduction.

III. The Scripture testimony is sustained by ABUNDANT COLLATERAL EVIDENCE.

The Early Christians worshipped a Trinity. This is evident from their prayers, hymns, creeds, and discourses, still extant. Trypho, the Jew, a bitter enemy of the Christian cause, about the middle of the second century, mentions this article of their faith ; and Lucian, the Epicurean philosopher, in the latter part of the same century, represents them as swearing “by the Most High God, by the Immortal and Celestial Son, and by the Spirit proceeding from the Father—One of Three, and Three of One.” Justin Martyr, one hundred and forty years after Christ, says, “Him, the Father

of righteousness, and the Son who came from him, with the Prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore." Athenagoras, thirty-eight years later, says, "We preach God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." Clemens Alexandrinus, sixteen years later, says, "Grant that we may praise the Son, and the Father, with the Holy Ghost, all in One." Tertullian, the eloquent, says, "There are three, of the same substance, power, and glory; eternally united, and constituting but One God." Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, says, "The three days before the creation of the heavenly luminaries represent the Trinity—God, and his Word, and his Wisdom." Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, concluded his prayer at the stake with a doxology to "The Eternal Father," "The Heavenly Jesus," and "The Holy Spirit." We might mention others—Clement of Rome, Melito of Sardius, Tatian of Antioch, and several more—all of the first two centuries, and some of them contemporary with the apostles—who bear distinct testimony to the same faith of the primitive Church. And their testimony is corroborated by Origen and Cyprian of the third century. The former says, "We acknowledge one God only—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The latter affirms, that by the form of baptism Christ inculcated the mystery of the Trinity. These citations show that the doctrine was held by the early Christians, and was not an invention of later times—not one of the corruptions accompanying the grand Italian apostasy; and consequently, that our interpretation of Scripture on the subject, harmonizes with theirs, who received the truth immediately from the apostles of our Lord.

The same doctrine was held by the *Ancient Jewish Church*. This appears from the remarks already made on the Aaronical benediction, and the quotations from the Evangelical Prophet. Similar evidence might have been adduced in con-

nection with several other Old Testament Scriptures examined. Philo of Alexandria, a learned Jew, who flourished before the birth of our Saviour, holds the following language: "He who is, is on each side attended by his nearest Powers; of which the one is creative, and the other kingly; the creative is God, and the kingly is Lord; and he who is between them, being thus attended by both his Powers, presents the appearance, sometimes of one, and sometimes of three." The Chaldee Paraphrasts, and other Jewish Commentators, speak of "Three Degrees in the Mystery of *Elohim*;" and these degrees they call Persons, and affirm that they are inseparably one. In the Jewish book Zohar is the following remarkable paraphrase on Deuteronomy vi. 4: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.* The Lord, and our God, and the Lord, are one. The first is Jehovah, the beginning and perfection of all things, and he is called the Father; the second is our God, the depth and the fountain of sciences, and he is called the Son; and the third is the Holy Ghost, that proceedeth from them both. Therefore he saith, *Hear, O Israel*; that is, Join together this Father, this Son, and this Holy Ghost; and make them one essence, one substance; for whatever is in the one is in the other: he was the whole, he is the whole, and he will be the whole." All this is strongly confirmatory of the foregoing arguments. If the great mass of modern Christians harmonize on this subject with the ancient Jewish Church, is there not, to say the least, some probability in our belief? If we have interpreted the Old Testament Scriptures as they were originally understood by God's peculiar covenant people, "who received the lively Oracles to give unto us"—who by Divine appointment, for fifteen hundred years, held the revelation of Heaven in trust for the world—is it not likely that our interpretation is correct?

Traditions of this truth have been found in nearly all

heathen nations, and may in many instances be traced back to a *very remote antiquity*. The Hindoos have always believed in a Triune God, whom they represent by an image with three faces, and worship under three names—Brahma, the Supreme Father; Veshnu, the Incarnate Mediator; and Seeva, the Destroyer and Regenerator. The ancient Persians adored a Trinity of Divine Persons, whom they called Ormusd, Mithr, and Ahriman; and the Oracles of Zoroaster speak of “a Triad of Deity, shining forth throughout the whole world.” The Egyptians had a Trinity—Osiris, Isis, and Typhon; denoting Light, Fire, and Spirit; and represented on their architecture by a globe, a wing, and a serpent. Abenephcius, an Arabian writer, says that by these the Egyptians shadowed *Theon Trimorphon*, or God in three forms. One of the principles of the Egyptian theology, as given by Damascius, and cited by Cudworth, is, “that there is One Origin of all things, praised under the name of the Unknown Darkness, and this thrice repeated.” Hermes Trismegistus speaks of a Great Eternal Intelligence, subsisting in Three Persons, denominated “Light, Mind, and Spirit.” The Orphic theology, the most ancient recorded in Grecian history, mentions an Eternal and Incomprehensible Being, called “Light, Counsel, and Life.” According to Suidas, Timotheus, and Proclus, Orpheus taught the existence of “One God in Three Minds”—affirmed all things to have been made by “One God in Three Names.” Pythagoras declared that “From an Eternal Unity sprang an Infinite Duality; that is, From Him who always existed alone, proceeded Two Others, who were Infinite.” Plato speaks of a Triad, whom he denominates “*Agathon*,” the Good; “*Logos*,” the Word; and “*Psyche Kosmou*,” the Soul of the World. Permenides mentions “Three Original Powers—The One, The Mind, and The Soul.” Amelius calls them “Three Kings,” and “Three Creators.” Numenius acknowledged a Triad, the Second

Person of which was the Son of the First, and the Third proceeded from both. In Thibet and Tangut the people worship an idol representing a Threefold God, and wear medals impressed with his image. An antique medal, found in Siberia, and placed in the cabinet of the Russian Emperor, presents on one side a human figure with three heads, and on the other the following inscription—"The bright and sacred image of the Deity, conspicuous in three figures." In the Edda, the most remarkable monument of Scandinavian theology, Gangler is introduced into the palace of the gods, where he sees three thrones, occupied by three equal Divine Persons. The image of the Roman Diana was stamped on a medal, with three heads united to one body. The German Trygla was drawn in the same manner. The Gauls united their gods in triple groups. The great idol of the Japanese is one form with three heads. Lao Kiun, founder of one of the Chinese sects, laid down this as the leading doctrine of his philosophy: "The Eternal Reason produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, and Three produced all things." The Iroquois say that Three Eternal Spirits were employed in creating mankind. The Peruvians adored Three Great Lights. The people of Cuquisaco worshipped an image named Tanga-Tanga—"One in Three, and Three in One."*

Is there no significance in these traditions? Had they no other origin than the random fancy of mankind? Whence, then, the remarkable coincidence of number, and similarity of phrase? How are we to account for these notions of a Trinity, inwrought in the religious systems of all nations, and traceable to the most distant periods of which we have any authentic records? Is it likely that so many human tribes, scattered so widely over the world, perfectly isolated and independent, would embrace substantially the same opinion,

* See Dwight's Theology.

without some common basis of belief? And what can that common basis be, but an original revelation from Heaven, transmitted from generation to generation, with various modifications and corruptions, through the ever-enlarging ramifications of the human race?

Thus, the worship of the early Christians, the faith of the ancient Jewish Church, and the traditions prevalent in all heathen nations, furnish abundant evidence and illustration, collateral to the Scripture testimony.

IV. Here we would conclude the argument; but many OBJECTIONS have been urged against the doctrine of the Trinity; a few of which, and chiefly the more common and plausible, it may be deemed necessary to notice.

The doctrine has been pronounced *self-contradictory*. Such a sentence argues misapprehension. It is by no means imagined that God is One and Three in the same sense. This would indeed be a palpable contradiction. When we speak of the Trinity in Unity, we do not mean that there are three distinct essences in some manner mysteriously conjoined—that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit possess, each of them without the others, a Divine Nature and Divine Perfections. We mean that in the same Numerical Essence there is an ineffable Threefold Distinction, to which there is nothing analogous in nature. To this Threefold Distinction the Greeks applied the term *Hypostasis*, and the Latins the term *Persona*; and we, if we speak of it at all, must follow their example. It is sublimely mysterious, but not self-contradictory.

It has often been alleged that the doctrine is *contrary to reason*. Nay, it is only superior to reason. It is not a theory proposed for speculation, but a revelation presented for belief. Men must not expect to comprehend every truth stated in the Holy Scriptures, till the finite shall be able to

grasp the infinite. There are a thousand other things which are never called in question, though they are equally inconceivable—equally confounding to our feeble reason. You believe in the Divine Eternity and Ubiquity: are they less mysterious than the Divine Tri-Unity? Do you doubt the reality of gravitation? Yet you cannot explain the phenomenon. Do you doubt the union of mind and matter? Yet you cannot trace the connection. Why, then, will you make the mysteriousness of the Trinity a ground of disbelief? You might as well embarrass yourself with the laws of your own existence, and question the fact because you cannot comprehend its philosophy. It is in each case the *modus existendi*, and not the fact itself, which transcends our comprehension; and this is a matter concerning which reason has no right to speculate.

It has been objected that the terms we use are *not found in the Bible*. We admit the negation. The term Trinity is said to have been introduced by Theophilus, in the year of our Lord one hundred and sixty-one; and the term *Persona*, or Person, is supposed to have been first employed in this application by Tertullian. But we contend not for terms? we contend only for truths. Yet we must use such terms as are best adapted to express the truths; and we know of none on this subject more suitable than those ordinarily employed. No matter whether or not the terms are in the Bible, if the doctrine is there. That the doctrine is there, cannot be denied, without a manifest wresting of the Word of God, and a total disregard of some of the plainest and most obvious principles of biblical interpretation. The Scriptures distinctly teach us that God is One; yet they as clearly inculcate that Three are God. These two propositions are compatible, or they are incompatible. If they are incompatible, then the Scriptures are self-contradictory, and cannot be Divinely inspired; but if they are compatible, then there must be, notwithstanding

its mysteriousness, a Threefold Distinction in the Eternal Unity. If this reasoning is sound, we must be either infidels or Trinitarians. We must believe that the Bible is a cheat, or that the Trinity is a truth. We must repudiate the volume as a Divine Revelation, or embrace its doctrine of a Divine Tri-Unity. And embracing the doctrine, we can see no valid objection to the use of the terms by which it is so accurately expressed; especially, since we all employ, and are obliged to employ, on other subjects in Theology, so many terms which are not found in the Bible.

It may be thought that this article of our faith is *wholly speculative*, of no practical utility, and therefore improbable, and unworthy of credence. This is a vast mistake. The doctrine is eminently practical. There is no announcement of the gospel more important to the hopes and the happiness of the Church. It sustains a vital relation to all our higher interests and duties, as fallen, redeemed, and immortal beings. Without a knowledge of it, we could never understand that grandest of all the works of God—"the ransom of a world." "Here the whole Deity is known." The Father sends the Son; the Son dies for sinners; and the Spirit applies the purchased salvation. Our prayers and praises are addressed to God the Father, through the mediation of God the Son, by the aid of God the Spirit. The first bestows the blessing, the second constitutes the medium of its communication, and the third is the efficient agency by which it is conveyed and certified to the believing soul. But how could poor sinners, environed as we are with materialism, approach the Eternal Father, sitting in his sublime spirituality and awful purity upon the summit of the universe, without the intervention of the Incarnate Son? And how could we trust in that intervention, if the Son were an agent, a delegate, angelic, or even super-angelic, yet inferior to the Father—if the Son were not essentially in the Father, and the Father in the Son? And

what could his “meritorious cross and passion” avail us, if, having returned to heaven, he had not sent us another Comforter, to abide with us for ever; and if that comforter were not something more than a mere attribute or emanation of Deity—a real personal agent, and one with the Father and the Son? Here is the basis of the gospel morality, and the ground of all acceptable obedience. To each of the co-equal, co-eternal, consubstantial Three, we owe an everlasting debt of gratitude and glory. Let us learn to adore, in silence, the Infinite Perfection; without attempting to comprehend his essence, his attributes, or his mode of being; till, changed into his blessed image, and caught up to his bright pavilion, we shall see him as he is, and praise him as we ought!

III.—JEHOVAH INCOMPARABLE.

NEARLY all that we know of God is that God is unknown. It requires the Infinite to comprehend the Infinite. He may possess perfections for which we have no names, of which we can conceive no ideas. Even of those faculties which he is constantly displaying before our eyes, we understand only enough to be able to say that they are immeasurable, incalculable, inscrutable. We give names to a few; but these are names, not for single faculties, but for vast classes of faculties, each incomprehensible to all but God himself. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Simonides being asked, "What is God?" demanded a day in which to frame his reply; finding a day insufficient, he afterward requested a week; the week having expired, he desired a month; the month gone, he asked a year; and finally, declared the question unanswerable. Even the inspired apostle, gazing, as from a precipice, into the abyss of Godhead, exclaims—"O the depth! how unsearchable! past finding out!" Yet in his works we trace his wonders, and in his word we behold the outbeamings of his glory. Let us approach and gaze, but with humble and adoring reverence. "Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee."*

* 2 Sam. vii. 22.

I. There is none like God in THE NATURE OF HIS ESSENCE.

"God is a spirit." What kind of a spirit we cannot tell. There may be as many varieties of spirit as of matter, as many degrees of excellence in the invisible world as in the visible, as many ranks and orders among incorporeal beings as among corporeal. God is the most glorious of all spirits, the only absolutely perfect spirit. The term does not describe his essence—only expresses his distinction from matter, his superiority to matter. He is called a spirit, not because there is any similarity between him and other spirits. Doubtless, he differs from the angel, more than the angel from the clod. Of his essence we are profoundly ignorant. We cannot comprehend, we cannot analyze, we cannot grasp it. It is much easier to conceive what it is not, than to conceive what it is. Most of the terms used to express it convey only negative ideas. We know not what God is. We know only that he is neither a corporeal being, nor clothed with a material habiliment—an invisible and intangible essence, "without body or parts." Corporeal, he could not be infinite. Confined within a material investiture, he would be inferior even to angels, and only equal to men.

True, we read of his eyes, his ears, his hands, his feet, his mouth, his nostrils, and the like. But none of these is intended to convey the idea of corporeity. They are figurative terms, employed merely for the want of a more perfect medium of communication. No language can express the modes of the Divine Existence, or the movements of the Divine Intelligence. God accommodates his revelations, as far as possible, to our infirmities—appropriates our feeble terms to denote his own glorious perfections, while he carefully guards them against misinterpretation by repeated explicit declarations of the transcendent and incomprehensible nature of his essence.

The spirituality of God gives us a gleam of light concern-

ing his *Omnipresence* and *Omniscience*. We can partially conceive how such a nature can be infinite in extension and intelligence; existing everywhere, and understanding every thing; pervading the universe, and perceiving all its phenomena; filling immensity with his presence, and comprehending eternity in his knowledge; most intimately near to every material atom, and most thoroughly acquainted with every mental experience; investing the personality of his numberless creatures more perfectly than the all-surrounding atmosphere, and scrutinizing their every thought and feeling more closely than the all-penetrating light; controlling all events, calculating all contingences, and surveying at a glance all the actualities and all the possibilities of the past, the present, and the future. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

II. There is none like God in THE DURATION OF HIS BEING.

He is "from everlasting to everlasting." His existence is

not measured by time—bears no relation to time. There never was a time when he did not exist: there never will be a time when he will not exist. Age is no attribute of his being. He is no older now than he was when he kindled the sun; and will be no older millions of years hence than he was millions of years ago. He is absolutely without beginning and without end.

Without beginning. If he created all things, he was before all things. If before all things, he never began to be; for there was no prior cause to originate his being, and being cannot originate without a cause. Therefore, if God had not existed from eternity, he could never have existed at all. Nay, if God had not existed from eternity, nothing else could ever have existed, for there would have been nothing to produce the first existence. So, if there had ever been a period when nothing existed, eternity must have been a void, and space must have remained unpeopled for ever. But the Scriptures ascribe to God being without beginning. He is “The Ancient of Days;” and his “goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” The Son saith—“The Father hath life in himself;” that is, not by participation or inheritance, but by nature and necessity; not as a stream flowing into him, but as a fountain dispensing to the universe. Receiving life from none, he communicates life to all. All creatures “live, move, and have their being” in him; but he “hath life in himself.”

Without end. God’s existence is self-existence. Self-existence is necessary existence. Necessary existence is everlasting existence. It can no more end than it could begin. It is impossible that God should ever cease to be. He cannot destroy himself. No created power can destroy the uncreated. Existing independently of any cause, there can be no cause for the cessation of his existence. The cessation of his

existence, therefore, would be an event without a cause, which is unphilosophical and absurd. The Scriptures abundantly confirm our reasoning. They declare that "the Lord shall endure for ever"—that "his years shall not fail"—"shall have no end." The prophet styles him "the High and the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity." A child defined eternity to be "the life-time of God." The idea is absolutely overwhelming. Calculate the moments from the creation of Adam to the present hour; multiply the sum by millions, by centuplicated millions; and let each moment stand for a chiliad, for a billion of years; but the proportion which the whole would bear to the duration of the Divine Existence would be infinitely less than the proportion which one second would bear to all this mighty period. Indeed, there is no proportion; and an attempt at illustration by comparison only degrades the sublimity of the subject. The longest period of time has its limit; but the life of God is illimitable and eternal.

What is *eternal* must be *immutable*. Men are constantly changing—their mental states—the very substance of their bodies. But God is "the same"—"without variableness, or shadow of turning"—"yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He can have no new ideas, no new consciousness. His present ideas are his eternal ideas; his present consciousness is his eternal consciousness—identical with all the past, identical with all the future. He can never forget; he can never anticipate. What took place a thousand years ago, and what will take place a thousand years to come, are both as really present to him as what is now transpiring. His essence and his attributes are the very same at this moment that they were before "the morning stars sang together" over the newborn worlds; and will remain precisely what they are, when "the heavens shall have passed away."

III. There is none like God in THE POWER OF HIS AGENCY.

If nothing short of Almightyness could produce something out of nothing, what must be our conceptions of that Omnific Energy which spoke the universe into being? *The creative faculty* establishes between God and all other agents a peculiar distinction. The very mention of such a power raises our thoughts to their utmost elevation. As Doctor Croly observes, "All the other acts and attributes of God exhibit him only as a more exalted specimen of human or angelic nature: creation establishes the impassable line; all thenceforth is separate, mysterious, supreme." And may it not be, partly, to impress his rational creatures with the fact of his infinite superiority, that the creative faculty has been displayed with such astonishing profusion and magnificence, throughout the teeming earth and the illimitable sky?

Revelation abounds with the most amazing descriptions of the Divine Power; descriptions to which Divine Inspiration alone is adequate, and in which even Divine Inspiration appears to labor. They are too familiar to require quotation, and too copious to admit of it. *Nature* speaks the same language. Look abroad through the universe, and behold the vastness and variety of the works of God. The fields of heaven are sown with stars. Our best telescopes reveal more than a hundred millions, besides above three thousand nebulae, each of which may consist of as many millions more. Every one of these glorious luminaries is a sun; and probably, like our own, the centre of a system of planetary and cometary worlds. How great must be the power of Him who "tellet their number, and calleth them all by their names"—who originally willed their teeming myriads into being!

These innumerable suns, with all their secondary spheres, are *in motion*—revolving, with inconceivable velocity, yet in

the most perfect harmony, around their respective centres ; and probably, with those centres, around some mightier centre of the whole. But God, with infinite ease, bears up all as “in the hollow of his hand.” A giant would stagger under the weight of a rock, and a falling mountain would crush an army of giants ; but God, without effort, sustains all worlds, and propels them in their orbits for ever.

And who will presume to say that they are not all *teeming with life*—peopled with innumerable sentient, rational, and immortal beings? In favor of such a hypothesis, analogy affords no inconsiderable evidence. It is difficult to believe that this insignificant sphere, which is to the whole only as a sand-grain to the solar system, can be the only world inhabited. It is difficult to believe that God would build so vast a house, and leave it without inhabitants—so magnificent a temple, and leave it without worshippers. O no ! every one of those refulgent orbs swarms with a population, of which the census has never been taken, and the number has never been told. What amazing views does this idea give us of Omnipotence ! One mind is a more illustrious display of creative power than the whole inanimate universe. Who shall estimate the value of the conscious, reflective, and immortal mind ; with all its loves, and joys, and hopes ; its capabilities of knowledge, of virtue, and of usefulness ; of union and fellowship with God, bearing his image, reflecting his glory, and advancing in all goodness and blessedness for ever ? “ Worlds were made for the use of minds ; minds for the use of God.”

The earth is supposed to contain ten hundred millions of souls. The sun is larger by nearly thirteen hundred thousand times ; and if hollow, could receive into its bosom more than a million such planets. If inhabited, how immense its population ! Extend the thought. The Milky Way is a cluster of suns, consisting of more than a hundred millions ;

and there are more than three thousand such clusters visible in space. If every sun, like our own, is surrounded by its planets; and every planet is attended by its satellites; and suns, planets, and satellites are all the abodes of life, and thought, and feeling—O God! what can be the number of thy rational creatures? and who shall tell what wings of light, what eyes of flame, what forms of wondrous beauty, what voices of melody and power, what orders of intellectual strength, what transcendent faculties of love and worship, what happy commerce of congenial souls, what ineffable sweetness of domestic sympathies, what blissful security of unsullied virtue, pervade the countless worlds that revolve around thy throne?

“Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how small a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power who can understand!” We are not to limit Omnipotence by what we have seen, or what we can conjecture, of its displays. The universe is the manifestation of the principle, not the measure of its capacity. In the production of the heavens and the earth there was an infinite reserve of creative energy. There was no labor, no effort. “He spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast.” His Almightyness can never be exhausted or diminished; and, for aught we know, in every imaginable moment of eternity, he may be creating new beings, and adding new excellences to those already created.

IV. There is none like God in THE WISDOM OF HIS ARRANGEMENTS.

Wisdom displays itself in the adoption of *suitable means* to secure *important ends*. Now, what are the ends of God? For what purpose did he create the universe, and with what view does he still sustain and govern it? Doubtless for the communication of good, for the display of his infinite bene-

volence, and the diffusion of his infinite blessedness. And what are the means by which he seeks the accomplishment of this glorious purpose? Look abroad over the universe. What an endless variety of creatures, organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, from the pebble to the diamond, from the mushroom to the magnolia, from the insect to the archangel. And the animalcule is as perfect in every part as the elephant, and the microscopic particles are as wondrously constructed as the stellar orbs. How admirable is the adjustment of every thing to its place! how nice the adaptation of the several functions to their several spheres! how perfect the arrangement! how beautiful the gradation! how harmonious the laws which govern! how manifold and mysterious the relations of the innumerable parts to the immeasurable whole!

Wisdom displays itself in the use of *few and simple means* to secure *many and stupendous benefits*. Here the wisdom of God is especially conspicuous. Hear the language of an eloquent American writer:* “The nervous filaments of the senses are finer than a spider’s thread; yet they are the avenues of communication between the world without and the world within. They spread themselves out over a little space at the roots of the tongue; and all the savors of nature become tributary to our pleasure. They unfold themselves over a little space in the olfactory organs; and we catch the perfumes of all the zones. They are ramified over a little space in the hollow of the ear; and the myriad voices of nature, from the notes of the mellifluous song-bird to the organ-tones of Heaven’s cathedral—the thunder, the cataract, and the ocean—become our orchestra. They line a spot in the interior of the eye, so small that the tip of the finger may cover it; when lo! the earth and the heavens, to the remotest constellations, that seem to glimmer feebly on the confines of

* Hon. Horace Mann.

space, are painted, quick as thought, in the chambers of the brain. By these senses we hold connection with all external things, as though millions of telegraphic wires were stretched from every outward object, and came in converging lines to find their focus in our organs, and through these inlets to pour their pictures, their odors, and their songs, into the all-capacious brain; nay, better than this, for we have the picture, the perfume, and the music, without the encumbrance of the wires."

This is but a single instance, in which the means is one, and the beneficial results innumerable. A thousand illustrations might be added. Gravitation is a principle which pervades all matter, holds the terraqueous globe together, attaches rocks and buildings to its surface, confines the ocean within its limits, governs all locomotion of men and machinery, regulates the revolutions of planets and suns, binds myriads of worlds into majestic systems, and in many other ways secures incalculable good to every part of the universe. The mysterious agent which we call light appears to be a simple principle; yet it originates all color, imparting endless variety of beauty to earth, and of brilliancy to heaven. "One act of Divine power," says Mr. Watson, "in giving a certain inclination to the earth's axis, produced the vicissitude of its seasons, gave laws to its temperature, and covered it with increased variety of productions." The origin of vitality is identical in all animals; and the bird, the bat, and the serpent, in embryo, are indistinguishable by the most skilful naturalist. The germ appears to be the same in the several species of plants. A single principle lies at the foundation of all organic life; but, coming under different laws of development, produces myriads of forms, functions, and gradations. In short, a few simple elements, in various combinations, compose the wondrous structure of the material universe; and earth, and air, and sea, and stars, are perhaps

resolvable into a dozen primary principles. Thus the Divine Wisdom, by the fewest and simplest means, secures the mightiest and most glorious results.

In the procedure of *his providence*, God acts upon the same principle: "from seeming evil, still educing good;" overruling the affairs of empires, "the wrath of men," and the rage of hell, so as to make all subserve the purposes of his transcendent goodness, the felicity of his immense dominion.

But the most stupendous of all the displays of Divine Wisdom is furnished in the fact of *our redemption*. This is the amazing scheme into which "the angels desire to look." How could the Universal Lord save the sinful race, without prejudice to his own adorable perfections, or injury to other orders of his subjects, and other provinces of his empire? Behold the Substitute, "God manifest in the flesh." Behold the mighty sacrifice, which meets at once the demand of Justice and the desire of Mercy. Behold Satan foiled by his own subtlety, and defeated by his own malignity; the cross which he has reared for Christ made the instrument of his own overthrow, and the occasion of eternal triumph to the Crucified. The death of Christ was the coronation of the wisdom of God.

V. There is none like God in THE BENEVOLENCE OF HIS CHARACTER.

Benevolence is *good-will*—the disposition to communicate benefit. God must be either benevolent or malevolent. If malevolent, he must be miserable, for malevolence always produces misery. Moreover, if he were malevolent, there could be no happiness in the universe. With infinite power to carry out infinite hate, he would make every creature utterly unhappy, and every world a hell. But this is not the case. Among our own species, sinful as we are, there is manifestly more happiness than misery; and, for aught we can tell, earth may be the only world that weeps. God, therefore, cannot be

malevolent; and if not malevolent, he must be benevolent; and if benevolent, infinitely so, since all his attributes are infinite.

On this subject, however, he has not left himself without witness. *The Scriptures are full of his benevolence.* "God is love;" and this is the most accurate, as well as the most comprehensive definition of his nature ever given to the world. What heart has not kindled over that most delightful account of the Divine character, contained in the proclamation of the Divine Name to Moses?—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."* All these titles and descriptions, except the first two, refer to the Divine Benevolence, denoting different modifications of the same attribute. The Merciful, Gracious, Loving, Longsuffering, Bountiful, Faithful, Redeeming, Pardoning God, is, in these several characters, only the Benevolent God, manifesting his benevolence according to the different relations and necessities of his creatures. His goodness is not an accidental or occasional affection, but one of the essential and invariable glories of his nature, of which all his other moral attributes are only so many different modifications. "The Lord is good, and doeth good." His benevolence is active, diffusive, a fountain for ever overflowing. "He delighteth in mercy." It is not yielded reluctantly, nor imparted indifferently, nor dispensed in stinted measure. It flows forth, a plenteous stream, from an eternal source. And it is as impartial as it is copious and free. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." He exercises his Omnipotence in spreading joy through the universe. No corner of his creation is overlooked or neglected. His bounty is alike unlimited and inexhaustible. "Like his emblem the sun," it has been eloquently said, "which sheds

* Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

its beams on the surrounding worlds, and enlightens and cherishes the whole system, without diminishing in splendor, he imparts, without being exhausted; and ever giving, has yet infinitely more to give.”*

Such is the testimony of Scripture. *The universe echoes the announcement.* All nature is vocal with the melody and radiant with the glory of the Divine Benevolence. It is chanted by every bird of song, exhaled from every flower of the field, and reflected in every beam of the daylight. Benevolence was doubtless the motive of creation. What else could have actuated the Almighty, in filling the void space with ardent existences, and kindling into consciousness myriads of rejoicing spirits? Could it be the selfish desire of enhancing his own glory and felicity? These were already infinite. O! was it not the desire of having creatures around him, to whom he might communicate something of his own infinite blessedness? “True, other feelings, born of this impulse, might join in the recompense. When the Almighty Maker, pausing from his work, looked forth complacently upon his infant universe, and pronounced it the perfect realization of his own beneficent idea, he must have felt the joy of a father, the power of a sovereign, and the loftier glory of a creator. But such feelings were the result, not the origin, of action. Nothing but the desire of communicating good, of having other beings to share his own blessedness, could be a motive worthy of the Supreme Source of virtue in the production of the universe.”†

So ample is the evidence, that *all nations have deemed the Creator benevolent.* The Anglo-Saxon name, “God,” means “good,” and the word was originally the same. “God,” says Plato, “is beauty and love itself.” “All piety would cease,” says Cicero, “if benevolence were denied to God.”

* R. Watson.

† Dr. Croly.

Look abroad through all surrounding nature, and behold the proofs of your Heavenly Father's love. "The productive powers of the earth are as much beyond all the demands of healthful sustenance, as the volume of the atmosphere which environs the globe is beyond the capacity of human lungs. There is not a mood of body, from the wantonness of health to the languor of the death-bed, for which the wonderful alchemy of nature does not proffer some luxury to stimulate our pleasures, or her pharmacy some catholicon to assuage our pains."* Still more wonderful is the provision made for mind. However great our desire of happiness, the Divine arrangement for its gratification is greater. So vast and various are the gifts of God, that he needed an immensity in which to display them, and we an immortality in which to enjoy them; and if we have any ground of complaint against the Infinite Provider, it is, that in our progressive ascent to higher enjoyments, we are obliged to leave so many pure and exquisite pleasures behind.

All the Divine administration is benevolence. Afflictive providences are but proofs of love, the tender chastisements of a Father, "most merciful when most severe." The terrible calamities which Heaven appoints or permits, for the punishment of wicked communities—war, famine, pestilence,—may issue in good to other portions of the human family, and yield immense moral benefit to the distant provinces of creation. Even the eternal fires which consume both soul and body in hell are the effect of love; and the sinner who would not yield to beseeching Mercy, falls a prey to insulted Justice, as a warning to other orders of probationary intelligences, who people myriads of the countless stars. Benevolence is the all-pervading, all-controlling principle of the Divine Providence; and whatever of suffering may exist in

* Hon. Horace Mann.

our little corner of creation, it only adds to the incalculably vaster amount of creature happiness diffused over the immeasurable works of God; every human tear swelling the ocean of celestial joy, and every groan of a burdened spirit, heightening the anthem of a jubilant universe.

But the sublimest instance of the Divine Benevolence, as of the Divine Wisdom, is seen in *the redemption of our race*. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" and by dying procured our life—the renewed life of the body from the grave, and the beatified life of the soul in heaven—

"A truth so strange, 'twere bold to think it true,
If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

On the cross of Christ we behold the heart of God laid open to the gaze of the universe. Here are Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power coöperating with Infinite Benevolence, for the recovery of man's forfeited inheritance of holiness and happiness; Wisdom and Power casting up a highway whereon Benevolence may march in triumph through the universe, with death and hell chained captives at her chariot-wheels, and myriads of ransomed men rejoicing in her train. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"O love that passeth knowledge! words are vain,
Language is lost in wonder so divine!"

How gloriously all the Divine perfections are united in this amazing scheme! How beautifully, like the colors of the rainbow, they are blended! How delightfully, like the lutes of the seraphim, they are harmonized! "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other;" and Supreme Majesty rejoices in the

embrace of weeping Compassion; and all conceivable attributes of the Highest Authority and Glory, coalesce and incorporate with whatever of moral loveliness is possible even to God.

“’Tis mystery all : let earth adore !
Let angel minds inquire no more !”

Let us profit by these feeble glances at Jehovah’s incomparable grandeur.

If such is the greatness of God, with what holy fear should we utter his name ! with what reverent awe enter his presence ! with what solemn delight engage in his worship ! with what ineffable gratitude celebrate his condescension ! with what raptures of love and joy contemplate our personal interest in his friendship !

If such is the greatness of God, how blessed are they who can look up to “the high and holy place,” and say—“Our Father, who art in heaven !” All his perfections are pledged to their interest ; all his resources are subservient to their happiness. He is their “shield and hiding-place :”

“Their shelter from the stormy blast,
And their perpetual home.”

“And if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” They are ever with him, and all that he hath is theirs. “Happy is the people that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord !”

If such is the greatness of God, alas for his enemies ! What will they do, when he riseth up ? and when he visiteth, what will they answer ? How will they meet an adversary whose breath is flame, whose chariot the whirlwind, whose artillery the thunder, whose host the marshalled spheres ? How will they escape his scrutiny, from whom no darkness nor shadow of death can hide workers of iniquity ? How will they stand in his presence, from whom the heavens and

the earth shall flee away? Rocks and mountains! ye will not tarry to shelter the impious “from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!”

“Be ye reconciled to God!” He is as great in mercy as in might. Approach him penitently, sprinkling yourselves with the blood of his covenant! Then will he smile upon you, and call you his children, and delight to do you good; and the devouring fire of his holiness, which now menaces the sinner, will melt the heart in its flame, but consume only the sin!

IV.—DIVINE COMPASSION.

MERCY has been called "The Darling Attribute of God." The propriety of such designation is at least doubtful. All the Divine Perfections must be equally dear to their Divine Possessor. All are beautifully blended in his moral government. All are delightfully harmonized in his redeeming economy. Yet if there is one quality of his character more worthy of such preëminence than another, it would seem to be this. As fallen creatures, mercy is our greatest need. As ransomed sinners, we are placed peculiarly under the administration of mercy. To our world, whatever he may do to others, Jehovah reveals himself chiefly as "the Merciful God." This is the aspect in which he is constantly commended to our faith and affections.

"Mercy is his distinguished name,
And suits the sinner best."

His power, his wisdom, and his goodness, are proclaimed by all the teeming spheres: his mercy is written in the blood of his beloved Son. The Scriptures everywhere pronounce him holy, just, and true: the prophet affirms, with peculiar emphasis, that "he delighteth in mercy." Indeed, this is a theme on which the Sacred Writers often kindle into ecstasies, multiplying terms of transcendent significance, with strange accumulation of epithets, and tropes which thrill like angel utterances, and similes which glow with more than angel

splendors; as if Divine Inspiration were at a loss for language adequate to the description—as if the Divine Nature, which in all conceivable perfections excels every thing else, did in this particular quality excel even itself. One of the most remarkable instances is a passage in the hundred and third Psalm, where “the sweet singer of Israel” magnifies the mercy of God by a variety of interesting descriptions, with comparisons the most sublime that creation and immensity can furnish, and the most touching that can be drawn from the relations of human life: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.”* For the encouragement of the Christian’s faith, we propose to illustrate and amplify, successively, these several statements of the man of God.

I. The first statement is a very simple one: “*The Lord is merciful and gracious.*”

The term “mercy” is derived from *misericordia*, a compound of *miserans*—pitying, and *cor*—the heart; or *miseria-cordis*—pain of heart. The mercy of God, then, is the pity—the pain—of his heart, inclining him to pardon the guilty and succor the miserable. “Grace” is the twin sister of mercy. The terms are used interchangeably; yet there is a distinction. Mercy supposes guilt: grace may be exercised toward the innocent. Mercy is the remission of punish-

* Ps. ciii. 8–14.

ment—the communication of forgiveness, and consequent blessings to such as have violated the law and incurred its penalty: grace is simply gratuitous favor—unmerited bounty—the bestowment of benefits without claim in the recipient. Mercy includes grace: grace does not necessarily imply mercy. God may be gracious without being merciful: he cannot be merciful without being gracious. To angels, he is gracious, but not merciful: to men, he is both “merciful and gracious.”

These definitions and distinctions furnish us a clue to the first attribute of the Divine Mercy. It is not an inert compassion. It is *communicative*. It is *bounteous*. Has not our Heavenly Father authorized his children to ask what they will, with the assurance that they shall receive? Does he not give liberally, and upbraid none? Is he not more ready to give to us, than we to our children—more ready to give than we to ask—waiting to be gracious—answering before we call, and hearing while we yet speak? Hearken: “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” Hearken again: He is “able to make all grace abound toward you,” and “to do exceeding abundantly above all you ask or think.” Hearken once more: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Having given that unspeakable gift, is any thing else too great for him to give—any thing which that unspeakable gift was not given to procure for us? If you needed a world, and asked for it in the name of Jesus, it should be laid at your feet. “Ask, that your joy may be full.” What has not God given already? Enumerate his blessings, if you can—the personal and the relative—the earthly and the heavenly. The catalogue is endless. You might more easily count the sands, as they trickle through the hourglass. Classification is nearly as difficult as enumeration. Every breath embraces a thousand. Every pulse measures out a million. They

multiply every moment—a river always deepening and widening—a fountain for ever flowing, yet for ever full.

II. The second phrase expresses a very affecting modification of the Divine Mercy—“*Slow to anger.*”

His “charity is not easily provoked.” His “long-suffering is salvation.” He delays punishment, that he may lead to repentance: men pervert the delay into an occasion of crime, till he can delay no longer; then he hurls his thunder with a backward hand, and an averted face. He always warns before he smites; generally suspends the judgment long after the warning; then executes it gradually, and by slow degrees, with frequent intervals of indulgence. He punishes with regret, takes vengeance with a pitying sigh:—“Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries: I will avenge me of mine enemies.” Numerous and wonderful are the illustrations in Sacred Story:—

All flesh hath corrupted its way before the Lord. It repenteth him that he hath made man. It grieveth him at his heart. The moral nuisance is too loathsome for the tolerance of Heaven. A general deluge is necessary to wash it away. The threat of extermination has gone forth. Yet waits the long-suffering of God a hundred and twenty years. Not till the last means for the reformation of the vicious generation has been tried in vain, does the dread catastrophe overtake them.

He has chosen the children of Abraham for his peculiar people. He has promised them the land of Canaan for a perpetual inheritance. Why is the redemption of the pledge delayed four hundred and thirty years? Why must they go down into Egypt, and sojourn there two hundred and fifteen years, cruelly oppressed by Pharaoh and his task-masters; and afterward wander about forty years “in a waste, howling wilderness?” The iniquity of the aboriginal occupants of the

promised land is "not yet full." There is yet a chance for their salvation. Jehovah will not destroy them, even to make room for his beloved Israel, so long as there remains any probability of their repentance.

The chosen tribes are on their journey. Ever and anon they murmur against Moses, and rebel against the Lord. Ever and anon they relapse into the shameful idolatries of Egypt. Yet he patiently endures their provocations and apostasies. Yet he takes not his Holy Spirit from them, nor withdraws the proofs of his loving-kindness, nor suffers his faithfulness to fail. The daily supply of manna still falls around their encampment. The river from the smitten rock still follows their wanderings. The pillar of cloud and fire still marches in their van. The *Urim* and *Thummim* still give out oracular responses. The *Shekinah* still hovers above the mercy-seat.

The ark is stationary at Shiloh. The people are spread out over the hills and vales and plains of Palestine. "The lines are fallen to them in pleasant places: they have a goodly heritage." The land "flows with milk and honey." But they are the same "stiff-necked and rebellious house." Again and again they forget their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Again and again they forsake his altars, for the high places of Ashtaroath and Baal. He hews them by the prophets, and chastises them by the heathen. But not till they have grieved and vexed him—made him to serve with their sins—for fifteen centuries, does he forsake his heritage. Not till they have consummated their crimes by the crucifixion of the Son of God, do "the guardian angels of the City of David" sing mournfully in the ear of its guilty population, "Let us depart hence!" Not till they have spurned the proffer of salvation through the very blood which they have shed, does the wrath come upon them to the uttermost, desolating their holy mountain, demolishing their glorious temple,

annihilating their national polity, and scattering them in isolated exile over the face of the earth.

And how great his patience toward *individual* delinquents! Why suffered he the first sinner to live nine hundred and twenty years, or granted a moment's reprieve to the murderer of his brother? Why did he not cut off Job in his murmurings, Manasseh in his idolatries, and David in his impurity and blood? And why has he borne so long with us—our manifold infirmities, our frequent backslidings, our omissions of duty, our unfruitfulness in virtue, our slothfulness in his service, our oft-repeated insults to his glorious majesty? "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." What fruitless fig trees—cumberers of the ground! Yet he has waited on us, how many years! Still he grants us abundant opportunities and facilities for reformation. He perpetuates and multiplies the means of grace and the incentives to piety. Not willing that any should perish, he delays to strike.

"Justice lingers into love."

III. Does this touch your hearts, or excite your admiration? Then listen to what follows:—"and *plenteous in mercy.*"

Wonderful expression! Let us analyze and amplify. "Mercy"—there is music in that word. How like an angel's voice it thrills the human heart! There is scarcely a term of richer import in the vocabulary of any language. Yet even this is too poor to express the feelings of our Heavenly Father toward his human offspring. The inspired writers adopt a variety of expedients to heighten its signification. Sometimes they connect an epithet with it—"great mercy," "tender mercy," "abundant mercy," "everlasting mercy." Sometimes they couple with it another term—"mercy and grace,"

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But none of these transcends the phrase before us—"plenteous in mercy." A plenty is *more than enough*. The Divine Mercy exceeds our necessity—more than enough for all our sins and all our sorrows. After we have been pardoned, restored, delivered, comforted, a thousand thousand times, there is still enough and to spare. Were there other fallen worlds to share in the supply—were half the countless orbs that float in the far immensity as full of guilt and suffering as our own—still there would be an abundance for all the wants and all the woes of their unnumbered billions. It is an eternal spring, an ocean without bottom or bound. An angel's line cannot fathom the abyss: an angel's wing cannot compass the infinitude. We stand amazed upon the brink, and exclaim, in the language of the apostle, "O the depth!"

IV. "Plenteous in mercy," he is profuse in pardon: "slow to anger," he is swift to reconciliation:—"He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever."

volence, and the diffusion of his infinite blessedness. And what are the means by which he seeks the accomplishment of this glorious purpose? Look abroad over the universe. What an endless variety of creatures, organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, from the pebble to the diamond, from the mushroom to the magnolia, from the insect to the archangel. And the animalcule is as perfect in every part as the elephant, and the microscopic particles are as wondrously constructed as the stellar orbs. How admirable is the adjustment of every thing to its place! how nice the adaptation of the several functions to their several spheres! how perfect the arrangement! how beautiful the gradation! how harmonious the laws which govern! how manifold and mysterious the relations of the innumerable parts to the immeasurable whole!

Wisdom displays itself in the use of *few and simple means* to secure *many and stupendous benefits*. Here the wisdom of God is especially conspicuous. Hear the language of an eloquent American writer:* “The nervous filaments of the senses are finer than a spider’s thread; yet they are the avenues of communication between the world without and the world within. They spread themselves out over a little space at the roots of the tongue; and all the savors of nature become tributary to our pleasure. They unfold themselves over a little space in the olfactory organs; and we catch the perfumes of all the zones. They are ramified over a little space in the hollow of the ear; and the myriad voices of nature, from the notes of the mellifluous song-bird to the organ-tones of Heaven’s cathedral—the thunder, the cataract, and the ocean—become our orchestra. They line a spot in the interior of the eye, so small that the tip of the finger may cover it; when lo! the earth and the heavens, to the remotest constellations, that seem to glimmer feebly on the confines of

* Hon. Horace Mann.

space, are painted, quick as thought, in the chambers of the brain. By these senses we hold connection with all external things, as though millions of telegraphic wires were stretched from every outward object, and came in converging lines to find their focus in our organs, and through these inlets to pour their pictures, their odors, and their songs, into the all-capacious brain; nay, better than this, for we have the picture, the perfume, and the music, without the encumbrance of the wires."

This is but a single instance, in which the means is one, and the beneficial results innumerable. A thousand illustrations might be added. Gravitation is a principle which pervades all matter, holds the terraqueous globe together, attaches rocks and buildings to its surface, confines the ocean within its limits, governs all locomotion of men and machinery, regulates the revolutions of planets and suns, binds myriads of worlds into majestic systems, and in many other ways secures incalculable good to every part of the universe. The mysterious agent which we call light appears to be a simple principle; yet it originates all color, imparting endless variety of beauty to earth, and of brilliancy to heaven. "One act of Divine power," says Mr. Watson, "in giving a certain inclination to the earth's axis, produced the vicissitude of its seasons, gave laws to its temperature, and covered it with increased variety of productions." The origin of vitality is identical in all animals; and the bird, the bat, and the serpent, in embryo, are indistinguishable by the most skilful naturalist. The germ appears to be the same in the several species of plants. A single principle lies at the foundation of all organic life; but, coming under different laws of development, produces myriads of forms, functions, and gradations. In short, a few simple elements, in various combinations, compose the wondrous structure of the material universe; and earth, and air, and sea, and stars, are perhaps

resolvable into a dozen primary principles. Thus the Divine Wisdom, by the fewest and simplest means, secures the mightiest and most glorious results.

In the procedure of *his providence*, God acts upon the same principle: "from seeming evil, still educing good;" overruling the affairs of empires, "the wrath of men," and the rage of hell, so as to make all subserve the purposes of his transcendent goodness, the felicity of his immense dominion.

But the most stupendous of all the displays of Divine Wisdom is furnished in the fact of *our redemption*. This is the amazing scheme into which "the angels desire to look." How could the Universal Lord save the sinful race, without prejudice to his own adorable perfections, or injury to other orders of his subjects, and other provinces of his empire? Behold the Substitute, "God manifest in the flesh." Behold the mighty sacrifice, which meets at once the demand of Justice and the desire of Mercy. Behold Satan foiled by his own subtlety, and defeated by his own malignity; the cross which he has reared for Christ made the instrument of his own overthrow, and the occasion of eternal triumph to the Crucified. The death of Christ was the coronation of the wisdom of God.

V. There is none like God in THE BENEVOLENCE OF HIS CHARACTER.

Benevolence is *good-will*—the disposition to communicate benefit. God must be either benevolent or malevolent. If malevolent, he must be miserable, for malevolence always produces misery. Moreover, if he were malevolent, there could be no happiness in the universe. With infinite power to carry out infinite hate, he would make every creature utterly unhappy, and every world a hell. But this is not the case. Among our own species, sinful as we are, there is manifestly more happiness than misery; and, for aught we can tell, earth may be the only world that weeps. God, therefore, cannot be

malevolent ; and if not malevolent, he must be benevolent ; and if benevolent, infinitely so, since all his attributes are infinite.

On this subject, however, he has not left himself without witness. *The Scriptures are full of his benevolence.* “God is love ;” and this is the most accurate, as well as the most comprehensive definition of his nature ever given to the world. What heart has not kindled over that most delightful account of the Divine character, contained in the proclamation of the Divine Name to Moses ?—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”* All these titles and descriptions, except the first two, refer to the Divine Benevolence, denoting different modifications of the same attribute. The Merciful, Gracious, Loving, Longsuffering, Bountiful, Faithful, Redeeming, Pardoning God, is, in these several characters, only the Benevolent God, manifesting his benevolence according to the different relations and necessities of his creatures. His goodness is not an accidental or occasional affection, but one of the essential and invariable glories of his nature, of which all his other moral attributes are only so many different modifications. “The Lord is good, and doeth good.” His benevolence is active, diffusive, a fountain for ever overflowing. “He delighteth in mercy.” It is not yielded reluctantly, nor imparted indifferently, nor dispensed in stinted measure. It flows forth, a plenteous stream, from an eternal source. And it is as impartial as it is copious and free. “The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” He exercises his Omnipotence in spreading joy through the universe. No corner of his creation is overlooked or neglected. His bounty is alike unlimited and inexhaustible. “Like his emblem the sun,” it has been eloquently said, “which sheds

* Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

its beams on the surrounding worlds, and enlightens and cherishes the whole system, without diminishing in splendor, he imparts, without being exhausted; and ever giving, has yet infinitely more to give.”*

Such is the testimony of Scripture. *The universe echoes the announcement.* All nature is vocal with the melody and radiant with the glory of the Divine Benevolence. It is chanted by every bird of song, exhaled from every flower of the field, and reflected in every beam of the daylight. Benevolence was doubtless the motive of creation. What else could have actuated the Almighty, in filling the void space with ardent existences, and kindling into consciousness myriads of rejoicing spirits? Could it be the selfish desire of enhancing his own glory and felicity? These were already infinite. O! was it not the desire of having creatures around him, to whom he might communicate something of his own infinite blessedness? “True, other feelings, born of this impulse, might join in the recompense. When the Almighty Maker, pausing from his work, looked forth complacently upon his infant universe, and pronounced it the perfect realization of his own beneficent idea, he must have felt the joy of a father, the power of a sovereign, and the loftier glory of a creator. But such feelings were the result, not the origin, of action. Nothing but the desire of communicating good, of having other beings to share his own blessedness, could be a motive worthy of the Supreme Source of virtue in the production of the universe.”†

So ample is the evidence, that *all nations have deemed the Creator benevolent.* The Anglo-Saxon name, “God,” means “good,” and the word was originally the same. “God,” says Plato, “is beauty and love itself.” “All piety would cease,” says Cicero, “if benevolence were denied to God.”

* R. Watson.

† Dr. Croly.

Look abroad through all surrounding nature, and behold the proofs of your Heavenly Father's love. "The productive powers of the earth are as much beyond all the demands of healthful sustenance, as the volume of the atmosphere which environs the globe is beyond the capacity of human lungs. There is not a mood of body, from the wantonness of health to the languor of the death-bed, for which the wonderful alchemy of nature does not proffer some luxury to stimulate our pleasures, or her pharmacy some catholicon to assuage our pains."* Still more wonderful is the provision made for mind. However great our desire of happiness, the Divine arrangement for its gratification is greater. So vast and various are the gifts of God, that he needed an immensity in which to display them, and we an immortality in which to enjoy them; and if we have any ground of complaint against the Infinite Provider, it is, that in our progressive ascent to higher enjoyments, we are obliged to leave so many pure and exquisite pleasures behind.

All the Divine administration is benevolence. Afflictive providences are but proofs of love, the tender chastisements of a Father, "most merciful when most severe." The terrible calamities which Heaven appoints or permits, for the punishment of wicked communities—war, famine, pestilence,—may issue in good to other portions of the human family, and yield immense moral benefit to the distant provinces of creation. Even the eternal fires which consume both soul and body in hell are the effect of love; and the sinner who would not yield to beseeching Mercy, falls a prey to insulted Justice, as a warning to other orders of probationary intelligences, who people myriads of the countless stars. Benevolence is the all-pervading, all-controlling principle of the Divine Providence; and whatever of suffering may exist in

* Hon. Horace Mann.

our little corner of creation, it only adds to the incalculably vaster amount of creature happiness diffused over the immeasurable works of God ; every human tear swelling the ocean of celestial joy, and every groan of a burdened spirit, heightening the anthem of a jubilant universe.

But the sublimest instance of the Divine Benevolence, as of the Divine Wisdom, is seen in *the redemption of our race*. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" and by dying procured our life—the renewed life of the body from the grave, and the beatified life of the soul in heaven—

"A truth so strange, 'twere bold to think it true,
If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

On the cross of Christ we behold the heart of God laid open to the gaze of the universe. Here are Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power coöperating with Infinite Benevolence, for the recovery of man's forfeited inheritance of holiness and happiness ; Wisdom and Power casting up a highway whereon Benevolence may march in triumph through the universe, with death and hell chained captives at her chariot-wheels, and myriads of ransomed men rejoicing in her train. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"O love that passeth knowledge! words are vain,
Language is lost in wonder so divine!"

How gloriously all the Divine perfections are united in this amazing scheme! How beautifully, like the colors of the rainbow, they are blended! How delightfully, like the lutes of the seraphim, they are harmonized! "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other;" and Supreme Majesty rejoices in the

embrace of weeping Compassion; and all conceivable attributes of the Highest Authority and Glory, coalesce and incorporate with whatever of moral loveliness is possible even to God.

“’Tis mystery all: let earth adore!
Let angel minds inquire no more!”

Let us profit by these feeble glances at Jehovah’s incomparable grandeur.

If such is the greatness of God, with what holy fear should we utter his name! with what reverent awe enter his presence! with what solemn delight engage in his worship! with what ineffable gratitude celebrate his condescension! with what raptures of love and joy contemplate our personal interest in his friendship!

If such is the greatness of God, how blessed are they who can look up to “the high and holy place,” and say—“Our Father, who art in heaven!” All his perfections are pledged to their interest; all his resources are subservient to their happiness. He is their “shield and hiding-place:”

“Their shelter from the stormy blast,
And their perpetual home.”

“And if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” They are ever with him, and all that he hath is theirs. “Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!”

If such is the greatness of God, alas for his enemies! What will they do, when he riseth up? and when he visiteth, what will they answer? How will they meet an adversary whose breath is flame, whose chariot the whirlwind, whose artillery the thunder, whose host the marshalled spheres? How will they escape his scrutiny, from whom no darkness nor shadow of death can hide workers of iniquity? How will they stand in his presence, from whom the heavens and

the earth shall flee away? Rocks and mountains! ye will not tarry to shelter the impious "from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

"Be ye reconciled to God!" He is as great in mercy as in might. Approach him penitently, sprinkling yourselves with the blood of his covenant! Then will he smile upon you, and call you his children, and delight to do you good; and the devouring fire of his holiness, which now menaces the sinner, will melt the heart in its flame, but consume only the sin!

IV.—DIVINE COMPASSION.

MERCY has been called "The Darling Attribute of God." The propriety of such designation is at least doubtful. All the Divine Perfections must be equally dear to their Divine Possessor. All are beautifully blended in his moral government. All are delightfully harmonized in his redeeming economy. Yet if there is one quality of his character more worthy of such preëminence than another, it would seem to be this. As fallen creatures, mercy is our greatest need. As ransomed sinners, we are placed peculiarly under the administration of mercy. To our world, whatever he may do to others, Jehovah reveals himself chiefly as "the Merciful God." This is the aspect in which he is constantly commended to our faith and affections.

"Mercy is his distinguished name,
And suits the sinner best."

His power, his wisdom, and his goodness, are proclaimed by all the teeming spheres: his mercy is written in the blood of his beloved Son. The Scriptures everywhere pronounce him holy, just, and true: the prophet affirms, with peculiar emphasis, that "he delighteth in mercy." Indeed, this is a theme on which the Sacred Writers often kindle into ecstasies, multiplying terms of transcendent significance, with strange accumulation of epithets, and tropes which thrill like angel utterances, and similes which glow with more than angel

splendors; as if Divine Inspiration were at a loss for language adequate to the description—as if the Divine Nature, which in all conceivable perfections excels every thing else, did in this particular quality excel even itself. One of the most remarkable instances is a passage in the hundred and third Psalm, where “the sweet singer of Israel” magnifies the mercy of God by a variety of interesting descriptions, with comparisons the most sublime that creation and immensity can furnish, and the most touching that can be drawn from the relations of human life: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.”* For the encouragement of the Christian’s faith, we propose to illustrate and amplify, successively, these several statements of the man of God.

I. The first statement is a very simple one: “*The Lord is merciful and gracious.*”

The term “mercy” is derived from *misericordia*, a compound of *miserans*—pitying, and *cor*—the heart; or *miseria-cordis*—pain of heart. The mercy of God, then, is the pity—the pain—of his heart, inclining him to pardon the guilty and succor the miserable. “Grace” is the twin sister of mercy. The terms are used interchangeably; yet there is a distinction. Mercy supposes guilt: grace may be exercised toward the innocent. Mercy is the remission of punish-

* Ps. ciii. 8-14.

ment—the communication of forgiveness, and consequent blessings to such as have violated the law and incurred its penalty: grace is simply gratuitous favor—unmerited bounty—the bestowment of benefits without claim in the recipient. Mercy includes grace: grace does not necessarily imply mercy. God may be gracious without being merciful: he cannot be merciful without being gracious. To angels, he is gracious, but not merciful: to men, he is both “merciful and gracious.”

These definitions and distinctions furnish us a clue to the first attribute of the Divine Mercy. It is not an inert compassion. It is *communicative*. It is *bounteous*. Has not our Heavenly Father authorized his children to ask what they will, with the assurance that they shall receive? Does he not give liberally, and upbraid none? Is he not more ready to give to us, than we to our children—more ready to give than we to ask—waiting to be gracious—answering before we call, and hearing while we yet speak? Hearken: “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” Hearken again: He is “able to make all grace abound toward you,” and “to do exceeding abundantly above all you ask or think.” Hearken once more: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Having given that unspeakable gift, is any thing else too great for him to give—any thing which that unspeakable gift was not given to procure for us? If you needed a world, and asked for it in the name of Jesus, it should be laid at your feet. “Ask, that your joy may be full.” What has not God given already? Enumerate his blessings, if you can—the personal and the relative—the earthly and the heavenly. The catalogue is endless. You might more easily count the sands, as they trickle through the hourglass. Classification is nearly as difficult as enumeration. Every breath embraces a thousand. Every pulse measures out a million. They

multiply every moment—a river always deepening and widening—a fountain for ever flowing, yet for ever full.

II. The second phrase expresses a very affecting modification of the Divine Mercy—“*Slow to anger.*”

His “charity is not easily provoked.” His “long-suffering is salvation.” He delays punishment, that he may lead to repentance: men pervert the delay into an occasion of crime, till he can delay no longer; then he hurls his thunder with a backward hand, and an averted face. He always warns before he smites; generally suspends the judgment long after the warning; then executes it gradually, and by slow degrees, with frequent intervals of indulgence. He punishes with regret, takes vengeance with a pitying sigh:—“Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries: I will avenge me of mine enemies.” Numerous and wonderful are the illustrations in Sacred Story:—

All flesh hath corrupted its way before the Lord. It repenteth him that he hath made man. It grieveth him at his heart. The moral nuisance is too loathsome for the tolerance of Heaven. A general deluge is necessary to wash it away. The threat of extermination has gone forth. Yet waits the long-suffering of God a hundred and twenty years. Not till the last means for the reformation of the vicious generation has been tried in vain, does the dread catastrophe overtake them.

He has chosen the children of Abraham for his peculiar people. He has promised them the land of Canaan for a perpetual inheritance. Why is the redemption of the pledge delayed four hundred and thirty years? Why must they go down into Egypt, and sojourn there two hundred and fifteen years, cruelly oppressed by Pharaoh and his task-masters; and afterward wander about forty years “in a waste, howling wilderness?” The iniquity of the aboriginal occupants of the

promised land is "not yet full." There is yet a chance for their salvation. Jehovah will not destroy them, even to make room for his beloved Israel, so long as there remains any probability of their repentance.

The chosen tribes are on their journey. Ever and anon they murmur against Moses, and rebel against the Lord. Ever and anon they relapse into the shameful idolatries of Egypt. Yet he patiently endures their provocations and apostasies. Yet he takes not his Holy Spirit from them, nor withdraws the proofs of his loving-kindness, nor suffers his faithfulness to fail. The daily supply of manna still falls around their encampment. The river from the smitten rock still follows their wanderings. The pillar of cloud and fire still marches in their van. The *Urim* and *Thummim* still give out oracular responses. The *Shekinah* still hovers above the mercy-seat.

The ark is stationary at Shiloh. The people are spread out over the hills and vales and plains of Palestine. "The lines are fallen to them in pleasant places: they have a goodly heritage." The land "flows with milk and honey." But they are the same "stiff-necked and rebellious house." Again and again they forget their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Again and again they forsake his altars, for the high places of Ashtaroath and Baal. He hews them by the prophets, and chastises them by the heathen. But not till they have grieved and vexed him—made him to serve with their sins—for fifteen centuries, does he forsake his heritage. Not till they have consummated their crimes by the crucifixion of the Son of God, do "the guardian angels of the City of David" sing mournfully in the ear of its guilty population, "Let us depart hence!" Not till they have spurned the proffer of salvation through the very blood which they have shed, does the wrath come upon them to the uttermost, desolating their holy mountain, demolishing their glorious temple,

annihilating their national polity, and scattering them in isolated exile over the face of the earth.

And how great his patience toward *individual* delinquents! Why suffered he the first sinner to live nine hundred and twenty years, or granted a moment's reprieve to the murderer of his brother? Why did he not cut off Job in his murmurings, Manasseh in his idolatries, and David in his impurity and blood? And why has he borne so long with us—our manifold infirmities, our frequent backslidings, our omissions of duty, our unfruitfulness in virtue, our slothfulness in his service, our oft-repeated insults to his glorious majesty? "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." What fruitless fig trees—cumberers of the ground! Yet he has waited on us, how many years! Still he grants us abundant opportunities and facilities for reformation. He perpetuates and multiplies the means of grace and the incentives to piety. Not willing that any should perish, he delays to strike.

"Justice lingers into love."

III. Does this touch your hearts, or excite your admiration? Then listen to what follows:—"and *plenteous in mercy.*"

Wonderful expression! Let us analyze and amplify. "Mercy"—there is music in that word. How like an angel's voice it thrills the human heart! There is scarcely a term of richer import in the vocabulary of any language. Yet even this is too poor to express the feelings of our Heavenly Father toward his human offspring. The inspired writers adopt a variety of expedients to heighten its signification. Sometimes they connect an epithet with it—"great mercy," "tender mercy," "abundant mercy," "everlasting mercy." Sometimes they couple with it another term—"mercy and grace,"

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But none of these transcends the phrase before us—“plenteous in mercy.” A plenty is *more than enough*. The Divine Mercy exceeds our necessity—more than enough for all our sins and all our sorrows. After we have been pardoned, restored, delivered, comforted, a thousand thousand times, there is still enough and to spare. Were there other fallen worlds to share in the supply—were half the countless orbs that float in the far immensity as full of guilt and suffering as our own—still there would be an abundance for all the wants and all the woes of their unnumbered billions. It is an eternal spring, an ocean without bottom or bound. An angel’s line cannot fathom the abyss: an angel’s wing cannot compass the infinitude. We stand amazed upon the brink, and exclaim, in the language of the apostle, “O the depth!”

IV. “Plenteous in mercy,” he is profuse in pardon: “slow to anger,” he is swift to reconciliation:—“*He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever.*”

Fury is not in God. He cherishes nothing akin to human implacability or revenge. He acts as a tender father, chastening his children for their profit: as a wise, just, and benevolent moral governor, punishing the guilty for the security of the innocent, or for their own reformation and salvation. The stroke is suspended till it becomes indispensable; then it is sparingly and compassionately inflicted; and as soon as the object is accomplished, the rod is removed. "He sends sorrow," says Bishop Taylor, "to cure sin, and makes affliction the handmaid of grace, and often a single cross becomes a double blessing." His angry chidings furnish the strongest proof of his loving-kindness. Were he implacable and revengeful, he would leave us to our waywardness and our wickedness, to fill up the measure of our iniquities unreprieved; and then he would pour forth all his indignation at once, without mixture of mercy or place of repentance. But he loves his disobedient children too well never to chide them—pities his rebellious subjects too much never to be angry with them. He chides because he loves—is angry because he pities. His compassion restrains the impatient thunderbolt, and wings the angel of forgiveness. Judgment is his "strange work." He always enters upon it reluctantly. He often relents in its execution.

Listen! He has denounced backsliding Ephraim with bitter menaces and maledictions. Ephraim, "chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," and "confounded for the sins of his youth," smites upon his thigh and exclaims, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." Jehovah hears the penitent bemoaning himself, and answers, as if in soliloquy—"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Listen again : "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? How shall I make thee as Admah ? How shall I set thee as Zeboim ? My heart is turned within me : my repentings are kindled together. I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. And I will not enter into the city."

Listen once more : "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

O, blessed encouragement for the broken heart ! Am I guilty—overwhelmed with sin, and shame, and grief, and fear ? Trusting in Jesus, I look up through my tears to my Heavenly Father. Does he frown upon me ? Does he menace me with all his terrors ? O, no : blessed be his infinite compassion !

"Kindled his relentings are :
 Me he now delights to spare :
 Cries, How can I give thee up ?
 Lets the lifted thunder drop !"

V. The experience of his people corroborates this account of his mercy :—"He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

The mercy of Heaven was never measured by human merit, nor graduated by human gratitude. Our crimes have been many ; but when were his blessings few ? Our crimes have been enormous ; but when were his blessings small ? Our crimes have been often repeated ; but when were his blessings

withheld? Our crimes have been fearfully aggravated; but when were his blessings diminished? Our crimes have deserved nothing but curses; but when were they requited with any thing but blessings?

Every sin—the smallest—deserves hell. It is a violation of the most perfect law, an insult to the most glorious majesty, ingratitude to the most exuberant beneficence, recklessness of the most transcendent interests. It is robbery of God, treason against his throne, the crucifixion afresh of his beloved Son. One such act might justly banish us from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power—might justly bind us with the everlasting chain, and envelop us with the unquenchable fire. But we have been guilty of derelictions without number. You might as easily count the drops that constitute the ocean, or the atoms that compose the earth. You might more readily calculate the pulsations of your own heart, were they quickened a million-fold.

Think of your sins for a single day. Begin with your omissions of duty. But why attempt to particularize? Are you not required to consecrate yourself—soul and body—a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, unto God? And if you have withheld all—yourself, your time, your talents, your substance, your influence—from Him who, as your Creator, Redeemer, Benefactor, and Lord, demands all for his service, does it not amount to a distinct act of sacrilege for every moment, multiplied by all his claims upon you, and the product multiplied again by all your faculties and facilities for glorifying his holy name? But to this dread indictment you must add the positive crimes of which you have been guilty—the ungodly actions and utterances—the sinful thoughts, motives, tempers, passions, emotions, and affections—difficult to classify, impossible to enumerate. Having ascertained the sins of a single day, you must multiply the sum by the number of days in the year, and the product again by the number

of years since your accountability began. O God! it is enough to frighten an angel! Yet all the while Divine blessings have been descending upon you—free as the air, and diffusive as the light—copious as the rain, and constant as the dew—exceeding your guilt as much as your guilt exceeds your power of calculation or description. Verily, “he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

VI. Now, the Psalmist rises from simple statement to sublime comparison: “*As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*”

Glorious conception! Go out in the clear and quiet night, and contemplate the stupendous altitude of the starry cope, and behold there an emblem of the Divine compassion. The sun is ninety-five millions of miles from the earth—a distance of which it is impossible to form any adequate conception. But let us try. Suppose a railroad from the earth to the sun; start a new-born infant for that glorious dépôt; let the car travel fifty miles an hour, and never pause for passengers or supplies; but the child becomes a man, and the man grows old and dies, before he has passed one half the space; for the trip would require two hundred and eighteen years. On the outer verge of the solar system is the new-found planet Neptune: had Adam been endued at his creation with the power of traversing the void immensity; had he set forth immediately for that distant goal; had he lived till the present hour, and proceeded every hour of his life fifty miles; he must have been journeying yet, and far short of the end of his journey; for it would demand more than six thousand years. The fixed stars—so called—are all suns, some of them vastly larger than that which rules our day; yet they are so remote as to appear but luminous points in the firmament; and the telescope reveals myriads more, so far beyond as to be

utterly invisible to the unassisted eye; and astronomers tell us of some, situated at so inconceivable a distance, that light, moving at the rate of twelve millions of miles a minute, would require five hundred years to travel thence to our terrestrial sphere; and it is rationally supposed there may be others, from which a solitary ray has never yet reached this planet since its creation, and will not for thousands of years to come. So high is the heaven above the earth; yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

Impressed with this grand thought, I divest myself of materiality, and go forth—a disembodied spirit—to explore the vastitude of the universe, that I may be able to form some proximate idea of my Heavenly Father's mercy. Directing my flight toward some feebly glimmering star that seems a lone sentinel on the far outposts of heaven, and travelling with the speed of an angel's pinion, I pass the limits of the solar system—pass Aldebaran, and the Pleiades—on, still on, till the twinkling point at which I aim expands into a magnificent orb, larger than a million such as I have left. I alight there, and look back for my native planet. It is no longer visible. But in the direction whence I came I catch the faint scintillations of a scarcely discernible star. It is our sun. O, what a distance I have travelled! Yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

Turning my eyes still upward, I see millions on millions of stars yet gleaming from afar. I plume my spirit-pinions for another flight. I dart forward with the velocity of a sun-beam. Reaching another glorious world, I pause again, and look behind me. The centre of our system is no longer seen. I strain my vision to catch the feeble rays of the sphere from which I last departed. How vast the field over which I have passed! Yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

I look up once more. The "living sapphires" still gem the azure canopy, as numerous as ever. Once more I set forth on my interminable journey. I mount with the rapidity of thought for a thousand years. I exhaust view after view: I explore universe after universe. Millions of suns succeeding millions spring to light before me, expand into majestic spheres as I approach them, wheel off to the right and left as I pass, close in upon my path behind me, dwindle into mere luminous points, and disappear in the distance. Systems upon systems, clusters above clusters, and nebulæ beyond nebulæ, rise like thin specks of haze to my view, and grow and brighten into immense fields of stars, which I map off into sections, and count by the billion. O God! the effort is useless: thy heaven is boundless. Yet so great is thy mercy toward them that fear thee.

It is the opinion of many—not without some reason in the developments of modern astronomy—that somewhere in the unmeasured altitudes of creation there is a great central sphere, whose single mass counterbalances and controls the countless myriads of other worlds, and around which all the stellar nebulæ revolve in harmony for ever. If there is such a grand siderial nucleus—such an axis of the universe; and if this is indeed "the third heaven," the throne of God, the native home of angels, and the place of final rendezvous for the redeemed; what a miracle of mercy—O, what a stupendous achievement of grace, and triumph of love Divine—to bring us—ingrates, outcasts, rebels, worms—hundreds, thousands, millions, of every nation and every age—after so long, and dreary, and hopeless an exile—all pardoned, purified, renovated, immortalized, and glorious as the angels of God—to join the general assembly and Church of the first-born amid the blissful immunities of that better world! Yet so great—O mystery transcending marvel!—so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

VII. The Psalmist recurs to the experience of his people in another comparison, scarcely less sublime than the preceding:—"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

The vagueness of the expression adds vastness to the idea. The figure denotes infinitude. The east is immeasurably remote from the west. The circumference of the earth is not its metre. The circuit of the sun is not its boundary. The stars that twinkle a billion of leagues beyond the rising sun are in the east, and the constellations that glow as far beyond the setting sun are in the west. There is no limit. Yet so far hath the Lord removed our transgressions from us.

He hath removed their *guilt*. It pressed upon us like a superincumbent mountain. The curse of the violated law roared around us like the deep and angry voices of the tempest. We felt ourselves "children of wrath." We trembled at the thought of falling "into the hands of the Living God." But we looked to Calvary: our fears subsided: our burden rolled away: Sinai ceased to flame and thunder; and now, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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He hath removed their *pollution*. "We are washed, we

are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "A new heart," "a clean heart," has been created within us. The evil passions are subdued. The nest of ravens and vultures has become an assemblage of swans and doves. We live by faith, walk in the Spirit, and "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Our *Azazel* hath borne our transgressions away into the land of forgetfulness. Jehovah hath cast them behind his back, into the depths of the sea, promising to remember them against us no more. As the sun, rising in the east, drives the shades before him to the west, so the Divine Mercy hath exterminated our sins. Our moral night is gone, and now are we light in the Lord. And if we follow on to know the Lord, our orient dawn shall brighten to perfect day, and grace shall soon be crowned with glory, and the distance of hell from heaven shall measure the removal of our transgressions from us.

VIII. Having explored immensity without finding an adequate similitude, the Psalmist now enters the family, and draws a most touching illustration from the paternal heart:—*"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."*

Behold that feeble old man, with the careworn and sorrowful countenance, bending over the couch of that fair young invalid: now pillowing her throbbing temples upon his bosom: now bathing her fevered brow with his tears; and night after night, in weariness and pain, watching the stars out in ministrations of love. That wasted sufferer is the old man's daughter. Her mother is no more. Brother or sister she has none. He alone lives to care for her; and the feelings of mother, and brother, and sister, and father, throb in his single heart. Trusting sufferer, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

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Fury is not in God. He cherishes nothing akin to human implacability or revenge. He acts as a tender father, chastening his children for their profit: as a wise, just, and benevolent moral governor, punishing the guilty for the security of the innocent, or for their own reformation and salvation. The stroke is suspended till it becomes indispensable; then it is sparingly and compassionately inflicted; and as soon as the object is accomplished, the rod is removed. "He sends sorrow," says Bishop Taylor, "to cure sin, and makes affliction the handmaid of grace, and often a single cross becomes a double blessing." His angry chidings furnish the strongest proof of his loving-kindness. Were he implacable and revengeful, he would leave us to our waywardness and our wickedness, to fill up the measure of our iniquities unreprieved; and then he would pour forth all his indignation at once, without mixture of mercy or place of repentance. But he loves his disobedient children too well never to chide them—pities his rebellious subjects too much never to be angry with them. He chides because he loves—is angry because he pities. His compassion restrains the impatient thunderbolt, and wings the angel of forgiveness. Judgment is his "strange work." He always enters upon it reluctantly. He often relents in its execution.

Listen! He has denounced backsliding Ephraim with bitter menaces and maledictions. Ephraim, "chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," and "confounded for the sins of his youth," smites upon his thigh and exclaims, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." Jehovah hears the penitent bemoaning himself, and answers, as if in soliloquy—"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Listen again : “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me: my repentings are kindled together. I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. And I will not enter into the city.”

Listen once more: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

O, blessed encouragement for the broken heart! Am I guilty—overwhelmed with sin, and shame, and grief, and fear? Trusting in Jesus, I look up through my tears to my Heavenly Father. Does he frown upon me? Does he menace me with all his terrors? O, no: blessed be his infinite compassion!

“Kindled his relentings are:
Me he now delights to spare:
Cries, How can I give thee up?
Lest the lifted thunder drop!”

V. The experience of his people corroborates this account of his mercy:—“*He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*”

The mercy of Heaven was never measured by human merit, nor graduated by human gratitude. Our crimes have been many; but when were his blessings few? Our crimes have been enormous; but when were his blessings small? Our crimes have been often repeated; but when were his blessings

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There is a sullen and refractory boy. From infancy his

obstinacy and intractableness have been plied with gentle dissuasives and mild remonstrances, such as none but a parent could employ. Occasionally the father has resorted to the more painful expedients of rebuke, and threatening, and a moderate use of the rod. But all his counsels and correctives have hitherto failed to

— “bend or break
The iron sinew in his neck.”

Now he resolves on severer discipline. But the lad arrests the lifted hand, by humble confessions, and fair promises, and penitential tears. A hundred times, in compassion to his pleading child, has the father refrained and forgiven; yet a hundred times has the offence been repeated. Will it be otherwise now, if the delinquent is spared? So would the father fain persuade himself. His heart melts at the tears of his son, and the purposed punishment becomes an affectionate caress. Penitent offender, “so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

Here comes the prodigal. Years ago he received his portion, and went into a far country, and squandered in profligate indulgence all that he had. Reduced to the last extremity of indigence, he degraded himself to the condition of a hireling swineherd, and envied the very beasts their fare. Famishing, and naked, and heart-broken, he resolves on returning to his father. Will that father receive a son who has so debased himself and dishonored his family? Surely he will not be very cordial, he will meet him with somewhat of reserve, even if he admits the ingrate to his house. Lo! he sees him coming, and his heart yearns for the wretched child. He runs to meet him; falls upon his neck; covers him with kisses, and blessings, and prayers; calls for the robe, the shoes, the ring, the fatted calf, and the merry-making dance and song. Poor contrite heart, “so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

IX. And why? What is there in us to excite his paternal commiseration? Nothing but our helpless frailty, our inability to bear our heavy burdens of sin and sorrow:—“*For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.*”

Admirable reason for infinite compassion! He cannot be ignorant of the frame which he originally constructed, and subsequently sentenced to decay. He cannot forget that we are dust—dust by constitution, and dust by doom. But the fact which renders us so unworthy of his mercy, is the very fact that elicits the exercise of his mercy. The circumstance which might be supposed to make him indifferent to our manifold wants and woes, is the very circumstance which attracts his gracious attention, and fixes his compassionate regards. He loves us for our very miseries. He sees our feebleness—how little we can do, and therefore is moderate in his exactions. He sees our frailty—how little we can endure, and therefore is sparing in his inflictions. He sees our guilt and ruin, and therefore provides means that his banished ones be not expelled from him. He beholds us withering as grass, and perishing as the flower of the field; and therefore proffers us the boon of life eternal, and in the person of our adorable Redeemer gives us the promise and the pledge of our reänimation from the ashes of the sepulchre.

Ah! how much he sees in us to pity, and how wonderfully his pity helps our misery! He pities our ignorance, and instructs us. He pities our errors, and corrects us. He pities our fearfulness, and encourages us. He pities our despondency, and reässures us. Are we tempted? his pity succors us; persecuted? his pity defends us; burdened? his pity sustains us; wavering? his pity confirms us; wandering? his pity recalls us; warring? his pity is our ally; wounded? his pity is our surgeon; conquered? his pity comes to our rescue; dying? his pity opens paradise to the departing soul; buried, and decayed, and forgotten, and the epitaph oblite-

rated, and the monument mouldered down, and the little mound effaced from the earth, and the place of our repose unknown to all the living? yet hath he a desire to the work of his hands,

“And ever from the skies
Looks down and watches all our dust
Till he shall bid it rise!”

But let us be sure that we sustain *the character* personally interested in this delightful view of the Divine mercy. There is danger of applying indiscriminately to mankind all that the Scriptures say about the compassion and fatherhood of God, not discerning between the righteous and the wicked—between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. But we must not forget that God is a discriminator of characters, though not a respecter of persons. He hateth the workers of iniquity, and cannot be indifferent to his own image in his saints. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; but those who fear him enjoy a peculiar interest in his loving-kindness. His mercy is modified according to the different characters of its several recipients. He is merciful to the unrighteous and the evil, freights the sun and the shower with blessings alike for the just and for the unjust, and sends the offer of a free salvation to all the world and to every creature; but his choicest, richest, sweetest mercies—his pardoning, purifying, renovating mercies—his paternal love, and constant fellowship, and peace that passeth all understanding and joy unspeakable and full of glory, that triumphs over death, and shouts amid dissolving worlds—these are reserved peculiarly for “them that fear him.”

Is such your character? Then “trust ye in the Lord for ever.” The Divine mercy is everlasting—the same now as when it saved the bloodthirsty blasphemer of Tarsus, or promised Paradise to the penitent upon the cross—the same as when Isaiah discoursed so divinely of its future incarnation,

or David celebrated its achievements in strains of seraphic psalmody—the same as when Jehovah proclaimed his name to the Jewish lawgiver—as when he established his covenant with the Father of the faithful—as when he flung his bow of promise over the retiring waters of the deluge—as when he shed the morning light of redemption over the blighted bloom of Eden. The dispensations change—the Patriarchal yielding to the Mosaic, the Mosaic introducing the Christian; but the character of God, and the principles of his moral government, and the gracious relations which he sustains toward the penitent and the pious—these are “the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, even as the living waters followed the chosen tribes in the wilderness. And death, though it freeze the vital current in our veins, shall not intercept the rivers of Divine Love. They shall still flow on—deeper and broader—during the blissful years of Paradise. Then shall come the grand denouement, when God shall crown his countless favors with everlasting mercy. He shall call, and the holy sleepers of six thousand years shall awake to a deathless life, and the flowers that faded in Eden shall bloom anew in Eternity.

But if you fear not God, you have personally no part nor lot in the matter. God hath other attributes than mercy, and all his attributes harmonize in his administration. None of them is sacrificed to mercy—none obscured by mercy—none thrown into the background for the more conspicuous display of mercy. All meet together at the Throne, and kiss each other at the Cross. The various colors are not more beautifully blended in the solar beam. The several parts are not more delightfully adjusted in a perfect harmony.

“A God all mercy, were a God unjust.”

But he is just, as well as merciful, and cannot acquit the

guilty. He is holy, as well as merciful, and cannot be reconciled to sin. He is true and faithful, and his threatenings as well as his promises must be fulfilled. He is as much obliged to punish the incorrigible as he is inclined to pardon the penitent. Refusing the terms of forgiveness, you must take the penalty of guilt. The day is coming when all the severer attributes shall rise up to avenge insulted Mercy. Beware, I beseech you, of that day!

“For justice to judgment shall call,
And who shall their coming abide,
When wrath the most fearful of all—
The wrath of the Lamb—is defied!”

V.—THE WORD INCARNATE.

NOTHING can be more important to a Christian than proper views of the Person of Christ. This subject sustains a vital relation to the economy of heaven in the redemption of earth; and it is not difficult to see how our opinions here must influence our faith, worship, and obedience. It is indeed a capital point; in which if we err, we are likely to mistake the way of salvation, and peril our hopes of immortality.

The Scriptures teach us that in the Person of the Redeemer God and man are united; that the Eternal Logos has taken into mysterious junction with himself our inferior nature, with all its attributes, and all its infirmities, except its sinfulness, which he could not assume without ceasing to be Divine. The doctrine resolves itself into three propositions:—*That Christ is God, That Christ is Man, and That Christ is God and Man united in one Person.* These propositions we proceed to establish.

I. CHRIST IS GOD.

The Arians held his superiority to all creatures, but his inferiority to God; his existence before the universe, but not coëternally with the Father. The Socinians believed that he had no being previous to his being in the flesh; that he was a mere man, and superior to other men only in sanctity and in office. The modern Unitarians embrace, some one of these

opinions, and some the other; but all reject the doctrine of two natures in Christ, and regard him as less than God. What is the inspired testimony?

The Scriptures teach us *that Christ existed in heaven before he appeared on earth*. Tell us, ye who deny his Divinity, how could he be before John the Baptist, who was by several months his senior? How could he be the "Root" and the "Lord" of David, who died more than a thousand years before his birth? How could he truthfully affirm his priority to Abraham, who had slept in the cave of Machpelah nearly two thousand years? What means the declaration of John—"In the beginning was the Word;" and the declaration of Micah—"His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting?" What means his own language, where he speaks of the glory which he had with the Father "before the foundation of the world;" and where he speaks of ascending up "where he was before," and whence he "came down?" How is all this to be understood, if Christ is not truly Divine?

The Scriptures apply to him *Divine names and titles*. In the Old Testament he is called "Jehovah God," "Jehovah of Hosts," "Jehovah our Righteousness," "The Mighty God and the Everlasting Father." In the New Testament, he is called "The True God," "The Great God," "The Only Wise God," "God blessed for ever," and "God manifest in the flesh." In both Testaments he is called "Emmanuel, God with us." These are names never given to men, or angels, or any other creature; yet they are applied to Christ in their obvious and proper import, and without restriction, rendering his Godhead an unquestionable verity.

The Scriptures accord to him *the attributes of Supreme Divinity*. He is Eternal, Immutable, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Almighty. These are natural perfections of God. None but God ever possessed them. God could not transfer them to another, without deifying him, and undeifying him-

self. Yet they are distinctly predicated of Christ. How is it that he appropriates the very language which God employs to express his own infinite glories, and that the same language is applied to him by inspired men, unless he is truly God?

The Scriptures ascribe to him *the works peculiar to the Almighty*. "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these doeth the Son likewise." Such are his own words. The apostle declares that "He who made all things is God;" but the evangelist affirms that all things were made by Christ; and there is no way of reconciling the two statements, but by admitting that Christ is God. Saint Paul says that "all things were created by him and for him," and that "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power." While on earth, he wrought miracles, and forgave sins; and that in his own name and by his own energy. He inspired the prophets that sang of his advent, and commissioned the Comforter that applies his salvation. He will raise the dead, judge the world, and renovate heaven and earth. All these are inalienable prerogatives of the Supreme; yet they are unequivocally claimed by Christ, and freely accorded to him by the sacred writers, furnishing conclusive evidence of "his Eternal Power and Godhead."

The Scriptures represent him as receiving *the worship to which God alone is entitled*. His apostles frequently paid him Divine homage, and he never reproved or prohibited them. The enemies of the primitive Christians accused them of worshipping "one Jesus who was crucified." Saul had authority from the chief priests to apprehend "all who called upon the name of Jesus," and Paul addressed an epistle "to all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ is praised in the apostolic doxologies, and appealed to in the apostolic benedictions. The hosts of heaven ascribe to him, jointly and equally with God the Father, "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and

honor, and glory, and blessing." And such worship is rendered to him in accordance with the published will of God the Father, who hath commanded all the angels to worship him, and given him a name for which he challenges the homage of every knee and the adoration of every tongue. If Christ is not God, then most of the Church on earth, and all of the Church in heaven, are guilty of idolatry.

The Scriptures maintain his claim to *an equality and identity with God*. "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." "All things which the Father hath are mine." These are his claims. Hear how they are accorded to him by the holy writers:—"The Word was God." "He is the image of the invisible God." "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Language could say no more. To be like God, equal to God, in the form of God, in the image of God, possessed of the fulness of God, is to have the attributes of God, and to have the attributes of God is to be God. If Christ be not God, there is no God revealed in the Bible. If Christ be not God, the Bible is the most deceptive book in the world. If Christ be not God, the authors of the Gospels and the Epistles could not have expressed themselves more delusively if they had made it their studious endeavor. If Christ be not God, either the New Testament writers were not Divinely inspired, or they were inspired to write falsehood, and enabled to work miracles in its confirmation.

Our faith in the Divinity of Christ is corroborated by *the testimony of the ancient Jewish Church*. The Hebrew writers of antiquity, without any other evidence than that which they gleaned from the Old Testament prophecies, regarded their

expected Messiah as a Divine Person, and spoke of him in language indicating an unqualified belief in his Godhead. In proof of this position we might quote the Jerusalem Targum, Philo of Alexandria, and other Jewish authorities before the birth of Christ. This fact confirms our interpretation of those Scriptures—especially those of the Old Testament—which we understand as teaching the essential Divinity of our Saviour.

But stronger collateral evidence may be gleaned from *the Christian Fathers of the first three centuries*. Barnabas and Hermes, companions of the apostles, invest Christ with the attribute of eternity, and ascribe to him the work of creation. Justin Martyr, Clement, Tatian, Melito, Irenæus, Theophilus, and Tertullian, all of the second century, assert his Godhead in the strongest terms; and so do Origen, Cyprian, Hilary, and Basil, of the third; and the Church of Smyrna, and the Council of Antioch, in their epistles to the churches; and Pilate, in his letter to Tiberius, states that Jesus was believed by his followers to be Divine. We refer to these testimonies to show that we symbolize on this subject with the primitive Christian Church, that our views of the person of Christ agree with the opinions of those who received the truth fresh and pure from the fountain. Thus employed, they constitute a powerful corroboration of the Scripture argument. Either we are right on this subject, or the first believers and teachers of Christianity were wrong.

Concentrate all this evidence, and what is the result? A momentous alternative. You must believe that the great mass of Christians have always been in error, trusting in a deceiver, and worshipping a blasphemer; and that the writers of the Bible, professing to be Divinely inspired, were a set of sacrilegious wretches, conferring upon a creature the glory of the Creator, and robbing the Almighty to deify an impostor; and that the author of the sublimest revelations ever made to the world, and of the purest moral system ever given to man-

kind, claiming Divinity alike for his character and for his communications, and authenticating the claim by most indubitable miraculous demonstration, was yet the most accomplished hypocrite and the most impious sinner that ever trod the earth; or else—and the alternative is inevitable—you must admit that Christ is God.

II. CHRIST IS MAN.

The Gnostics and Apollinarians admitted his Divinity, but denied his humanity. The former believed that his human body was only an appearance, not a reality; the latter taught that he had a real human body, but not a human soul. The Holy Scriptures speak of him as possessing a proper and complete humanity, comprehending both a human body and a human soul, with all their essential attributes.

In favor of his humanity, *the necessity of the case* furnishes a strong presumption. The *Goël* must be a kinsman. Our Redeemer must be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He must atone for the offence in the very nature of the offender. He must be “made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law.” He must be “tempted in all points like as we are,” that he may “be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” Without becoming a man, he could not suffer as man’s substitute—could in nowise fulfil the conditions of our redemption. Therefore, “because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “If you could once prove,” says the eloquent Henry Melvill, “that Christ was not perfect man—bearing always in mind that sinfulness is not essential to this perfectness—there would be nothing worth battling for in the truth that Christ is perfect God: the only Redeemer who can redeem, like the *Goël* under the law, being necessarily my kinsman; and none being my kinsman who is not of the same nature, born of a woman, of the substance of that

woman, my brother in all but rebellion, myself in all but unholiness."

The fact is as obvious as the necessity. He calls himself "a man." The sacred writers call him a man, and clothe him with all the essential attributes of humanity. He is styled "a man of sorrows," "a man approved of God," and "the man Christ Jesus;" and more than seventy times in the New Testament he is denominated "the Son of man." During his earthly life he sustained the several relations of a man, and exercised the functions and affections belonging to those relations: as son and brother—as guest, friend, master, and public teacher.

What fact is clearer than that he had *a human body*? He speaks often of his own body. Prophets, apostles, and evangelists speak of it. Like other men, he was born, circumcised, and increased in stature. He possessed the form, features, organs, and senses common to the human species. He hungered and thirsted—ate and drank. He walked, talked, and labored: grew weary, rested, and slept. He wept, sweat, bled, died, and was buried. There is the same evidence that he had a real human body, as that Peter or John had a real human body; and the principle of interpretation that would set aside this truth would obliterate every other fact or doctrine of the Bible.

Is it not equally evident that he had *a human soul*? The soul is essential to the constitution of the man. The body without the soul is not a man. If Christ were a superior spiritual nature dwelling in a human body without a human soul—that superior spiritual nature serving instead of a soul—he would be far enough from being a man. The apostle tells us that "it behooved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren;" but if he had not a human soul as well as a human body, he was in one very important respect, and that the most important of all, perfectly unlike his brethren. His

soul is as often mentioned as his body:—"Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "He hath poured out his soul unto death." "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." "Now is my soul troubled." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." The Scriptures ascribe to him all the essential faculties, affections, and habitudes of a human soul, and he exhibited them all. He had human judgment, memory, and imagination. He had human sympathies, attachments, and aversions. He "waxed strong in spirit," and "increased in wisdom." He "rejoiced in spirit," and was "sorrowful and sore amazed." These statements cannot apply, either to his human body, or to the Divine Nature dwelling in it. They relate to his human soul. All this is incompatible with the Arian hypothesis. How can acquisition and improvement be predicated of an infinite spirit? How can an omniscient mind require or receive instruction, or increase in wisdom and knowledge? Will it be said that this mental progress was only in appearance? Then it was a deception unworthy of God or man. Will it be said that the Divine Logos, in its incarnation, lost its plenitude of intelligence, and became feeble and limited as the mind of a child? Then the change was not merely an assumption of humanity, but a real transmutation and degradation of the superior nature into the inferior. How could Christ be "the Seed of Abraham," and "the Son of David," if he had not, like them, a human soul, as well as a human body? How could he be called "a man," and "the Son of man," if he had only the body of a man, without the soul of a man? The living body is in itself no more a man than the shrouded corpse. It is written that Christ was "made under the law;" but how could this be, if he had not a human soul? Could a mere human body qualify him for subjection to a law which is addressed to the mind? or could a Divine mind be subject to a law intended for the government of the human mind? If any

imagine the term "flesh" in John i. 14, and elsewhere when similarly applied, refers to the body exclusive of the soul, it is easy to show that it signifies simply human nature, embracing both the corporeal and the spiritual. Take the following:—"All flesh had corrupted his way"—"Unto thee shall all flesh come"—"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh"—"All flesh shall see the salvation of God"—"Let all flesh bless his holy name for ever." In these places "all flesh" means all men. Man is denominated "flesh" from his visible part, or external condition. So, when it is said, "The *Logos* was made flesh," the sense evidently is that he assumed human nature, including the mental as well as the corporeal. In short, if there is no sufficient proof that Christ had a human soul, there is no sufficient proof that he had a human body. If there is no sufficient proof that he had a human soul, there is no sufficient proof that any man has a human soul. If there is no sufficient proof that he had a human soul, there is no sufficient proof of any other fact of the evangelical history. And thus we complete the argument for the manhood of our Mediator: showing him to be man in no mystical or figurative sense, but strictly and literally, in every respect, and in every degree.

But it must not be supposed that his was a *fallen and sinful humanity*. This is not essential to our nature: it is the great accident of our nature. Adam in Paradise was human, but not sinful. Saints in heaven are human, but not sinful. So Jesus was human, but not sinful. The sinfulness of our Redeemer would have frustrated the plan of our redemption. A fallen nature never could have atoned for a fallen race. But Christ's humanity was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." It never existed till it existed in connection with the Divinity; therefore, though a human nature, it was not a human person; and not being a human person, it was not represented by Adam, and could not be defiled

by his fall. It possessed all our innocent infirmities, but none of our sinful propensities—shared the consequences without participating in the cause. Derived from a human parent, it could suffer; but produced by the Holy Spirit, it could not sin. It was an afflicted, but an unfallen nature.

In the fact of Christ's humanity we find *unspeakable consolation*. How it soothes the believer's sorrows, and strengthens his penitential trust, and elicits all the ardor of his love, to know that his Redeemer, notwithstanding his glorious and ineffable perfections, as the Creator and Sovereign of the universe—perfections which shone forth occasionally to dazzle and astound the world while he tabernacled and dwelt among us—yet, to use the language of another,* “that he was like myself in all points, my sinfulness only excepted: that his flesh, like mine, could be lacerated by stripes, wasted by hunger, and torn by nails: that his soul, like mine, could be assaulted by Satan, harassed by temptation, and disquieted under the hidings of the Father's countenance: that he could suffer every thing which I can suffer, except the remorse of a guilty conscience: that he could weep every tear which I can weep, except the tear of repentance: that he could fear with every fear, hope with every hope, and joy with every joy, which I may entertain as a man, and not be ashamed of as a Christian!”

III. CHRIST IS GOD-MAN.

That the Divine and the human are mysteriously united in his person, is the doctrine generally received by the Church, from the apostles to the present time. In a few instances, it has been denied, and, in many, misconceived and perverted. The Nestorians believed that God dwelt in Christ as in a temple; that the union of the Son of God and the Son of man

* H. Melvill.

was a union only of will and affection. The Eutychians held that the human nature of Christ was absorbed in the Divine, so that he had only the appearance of humanity, and not the reality. The Monophysites contended for two persons, as well as two natures, in Christ, but believed them to be, in some mysterious manner, so blended and confounded as to constitute but one. The Monotholites absurdly ascribed to Christ two natures, with only one will, as if there could be an intelligent nature without a will, or as if two wills could not be perfectly harmonious. The Sabellians affirmed that there is but one person in the Godhead, who originally as the Father gave the Law, subsequently as the Son dwelt among men, and finally as the Spirit diffused himself over the Church. The Swedenborgians assert that God came into the world to glorify humanity by making it Divine; and that the human nature of our blessed Lord, by virtue of its connection with the Divinity, is itself God. A more scriptural view of the matter is that put forth by the Council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century:—"That in Christ there is but one person; in the unity of person, two natures—the human and Divine; and that of these two natures there is no change, or mixture, or confusion, but each retains its own distinguishing properties." The doctrine is very clearly and fully stated in the Athanasian Creed:—"Christ is perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by the conversion of Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ." This, then, is the point to be established—That the two natures in our Lord constitute but one person—That the Godhead and the manhood united constitute but one Christ.

Here, also, we may argue from *the necessity of the case*.

Without such a union of natures, Christ could not be a suitable and sufficient Mediator between God and man. If he were not man, he could not be man's substitute—could not represent our race, or suffer in our stead. If he were not God, his obedience unto death could possess no merit to atone for us, and could benefit us no more than the sufferings of any other creature. But if he were God and man without the union of the two natures in one person, though the humanity might suffer and the Divinity might merit, yet the suffering would belong to one person and the merit to another, and both could never belong to either, and neither could ever belong to both. Our substitute must be God and man in the same person, in order that to the same person may belong both the suffering and the merit. Our Mediator must be equally allied to both parties, and both parties must be alike represented in his person.

This reasoning is susceptible of *abundant confirmation from the Holy Scriptures*, both by rational inference and by explicit declaration. Christ is frequently mentioned as two natures, but he is always represented as one person. The works peculiar to God are often ascribed to him under his human appellations, while the actions and sufferings proper only to man are as often predicated of him under his Divine names and titles. The absolute manner in which he is spoken of, forbids the idea that there is any confusion of the two natures in his person—that the Godhead lost any of its essential character from its union with the manhood, or the manhood from its union with the Godhead. If his Divine nature were at all impaired, he would not be God; if his human nature were essentially changed, he would not be man; if the two natures were mixed and confounded in his person, he would be a compound being, and neither God nor man. “Nothing is deficient in his humanity,” says Richard Watson, “nothing in his Divinity, and

yet he is one Christ." "It is a personal union," says Robert Hall, "but not a union of persons." It is a union of two natures in one person. "Nor let it be forgotten," adds this eloquent divine, "that these natures are not blended together; but retain, notwithstanding their union, their essential properties. The humanity is not deified; the Divinity is not humanized. The Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God. The Divine nature is still, according to its essential attributes, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent; the human nature is still, according to its native qualities, attached to one particular place at a time, limited in its knowledge, and bounded in its power."

"These two circumstances," says Mr. Watson—"the completeness of each nature, and the union of both in one person—is *the only key to the language of the New Testament*; and so entirely explains and harmonizes the whole, as to afford the strongest proof, next to its explicit verbal statement, of the doctrine that our Lord is at once truly God and truly man." On any other hypothesis, there is no satisfactory explanation possible of the Evangelical Record. There are but three ways of interpreting those scriptures which speak of the person of Christ: the language must be referred to his humanity alone, or to his Divinity alone, or to both natures conjoined. Thus all is rendered perfectly intelligible, consistent, and harmonious.

If any inquire how Christ, being God, could be born of a woman—grow in wisdom and stature—become subject to law—be tempted, sorrowful, forsaken of his Father—be crucified, buried, raised from the dead, and received up to the right hand of the Supreme Majesty,—we answer, he is man as well as God, and all this is spoken of his humanity. If any inquire how Christ, being man, could exist before the foundation of the world—could bear the appropriate and peculiar names of Deity—could justly claim and properly

receive the adoration of heaven and earth—could be present with his people in every place and throughout all time—could perceive the thoughts and reasonings of his enemies, and foresee every circumstance of his own ineffable sufferings—could authoritatively, by word or will, still the storm, heal the sick, raise the dead, forgive sins, and cast out devils,—we answer, he is God as well as man, and all this is spoken of his Divinity. If any inquire how the two extremes of weakness and power, suffering and triumph, humiliation and majesty, could coëxist in the same being—how the Messiah could be both David's Lord and David's Son, his Root and his Offspring—how Christ Jesus could be before Abraham, and yet a descendant of Abraham—how God, who is a Spirit, could purchase the Church with his own blood—how the Prince of life could be killed, and the Lord of glory could be crucified—how he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, could be also in the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death—how he who is the image of the invisible God, who was before all things, by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist, could suffer for us, and shed his blood for us, and lay down his life for us, and by the sacrifice of himself procure our salvation,—we answer, he is two natures in one person—God and man constituting but one Christ. Thus the consistency of the sacred writers is vindicated, the three classes of scriptures are mutually adjusted, and apparently conflicting passages are rendered perfectly harmonious.

With such evidence before us, *the mysteriousness of the connection* constitutes no barrier to belief. What is unknown cannot alter what is known. Our ignorance of one thing cannot weaken God's testimony to another. The proof of the Incarnation is just as complete, and just as satisfactory, as if there were no mystery in the matter. A thing may be credible, though it is incomprehensible. We believe a thou-

sand things which we cannot explain. All admit the connection of mind and matter: who understands the mode? Is there any more mysteriousness in the union of two distinct natures in one person, than in the union of two distinct elements in one nature? If a spirit and a body can be so joined together as to make but one man, why may not the Divinity and the humanity be so joined together as to make but one Mediator? Is the latter more inexplicable than the former, or more an impossibility with God? Why should our faith in what Heaven has communicated, be affected by our ignorance of what he has withheld? "Secret things belong to God:" to us, only "things which are revealed." He has not explained the phenomenon of the incarnation, and we should not aspire to a wisdom above what is written. The question for us is—"What is Christ?" not—"How did he become such?" The latter lies without the province of human speculation. It is "too high" for us: we "cannot attain unto it." There is no analogy for its illustration. We receive the fact, but we leave its philosophy with God.

Robert Hall calls the incarnation of the Logos "the mystic ladder which conducts mortals to the abode of the Eternal." Is it not also the ladder by which the Eternal descends to mortals? This "*Hypostatic Union*" has bridged the great gulf between the world of spirit and the world of sense. It has brought the Infinite within our grasp, and rendered the Invisible an object of sight. Here we behold God looking upon us with human eyes, and hear him speaking to us with a human voice. Here the Deity reveals himself by sensible exhibition, and we feel that he has indeed pitched his tabernacle with men, and dwells among them.

Scholastic theology has made the Eternal a cold and desolate abstraction; a being who loves without sympathy, and hates without emotion; and viewing him through this medium, we deem his moral character as dissimilar to any human exhi-

bition of the highest virtue, as we conceive his glorious abode to be distant from our terrestrial habitation. But the assumption of humanity by the Logos has brought Deity within our ken, revealed his character in distinct personality, and made his virtues palpable. We see the Divine benevolence embodied, and going about doing good. We behold Infinite Compassion weeping at the grave of Lazarus, and bewailing the anticipated doom of Jerusalem. We can make a study of Godhead. We can read his character, as we can read the character of our fellow-men. We can discern his goodness, as we discern his glory, "in the face of Jesus Christ."

And while we thus learn what God is, we learn also what man should be. While we discover what he has done to save us, we discover also what we must do to avail ourselves of that salvation. The precept is illustrated by the example; the description by the model. All moral goodness is embodied in our Redeemer. He is the perfect and infallible standard of every virtue. The saints are designated as his "followers," and directed "to walk as he also walked." He hath brought God down to us, that he may lead us up to God. He hath taken upon himself the human nature, that we may become partakers of the Divine. He is made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we may awake satisfied with the likeness of our Maker. In our nature he suffered to expiate our sins, in our nature he stands before the Father as our advocate, and in our nature he will finally return to take us to himself. Let us trust in his merit, hope in his mercy, and wait for his salvation. Thus shall we verify the prophetic promise:—"A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as springs of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Our Brother is "the blessed and only Potentate, who alone hath immortality;" and his arms, that built the starry vault, are extended to embrace us; and his heart, throbbing

with human sympathies, and glowing with the infinite love of Godhead, is open to receive us all. He died for us; and lo! he is "alive for evermore;" and with the same glorified humanity in which he went up from Olivet, he shall return to claim his ransomed kindred; and holy men, by virtue of his assumption of their nature, sustaining a nearer relation to him than any other order of creatures in the universe, shall be copartners of his throne, joint-heirs of his infinite glory and blessedness.

"This sum of good to man,
Shout earth! shout heaven!"

VI.—THE MYSTERIOUS AGONY.

WHAT is there in human literature, ancient or modern, historic or romantic—nay, what is there even in the word of God—that strikes the mind with such tender astonishment, as the familiar record of the Redeemer's agony the night before his crucifixion? To see stalwart manhood struggling with disease and distracted with pain—to see fragile beauty languishing in consumption, and slowly fading from the world—to see innocent childhood writhing in convulsions, or stretching out its little hands imploringly, amid the chill waters of death—either of these were a sight sufficiently touching to a tender and sympathetic nature. But to see the immaculate Son of God—the Almighty Maker and Sustainer of the universe, in his tabernacle of human flesh, wrestling with an unknown anguish, deprecating the crisis of his woe, bathed with a bloody perspiration, and receiving angelic succor—this is a spectacle which equally excites our pity and confounds our reason. To such a view we are now invited; but let us draw near with reverence, for the ground we tread is holy. We will first take a cursory survey of *the circumstances* connected with this amazing phenomenon, and then inquire more particularly into *the nature of the sufferings* recorded.

I. The narratives of Matthew and Mark are very similar. They both relate the same things, in nearly the same language. They are more copious than Luke, and mention several circumstances which he has omitted. They tell us

that the agony was in a garden called Gethsemane: Luke does not name the place, but simply alludes to its locality. They tell us that Jesus left eight of his disciples near the entrance, and took three of them farther into the interior: Luke says nothing of this separation. They tell us that he went away and prayed three times, and three times returned and reproved the sleepers: Luke makes no reference to the repetition. They tell us that in prayer he "fell upon the earth," "fell upon his face:" Luke states only that he "kneeled down and prayed." In all this there is no contradiction: it is merely the omission by the one of what is related by the others. But Luke mentions two very important circumstances, to which Matthew and Mark do not refer at all—the ministering seraph, and the bloody sweat.

Let us leave the garden. Let us enter the city. It is evening. There is a large upper room, where lights are burning. Let us ascend. Who are these twelve reclining at supper? Who is that remarkable personage at the head of the table, with that fair young friend, of almost feminine loveliness, leaning upon his bosom? How majestic that brow! How radiant that eye with the outbeaming soul! How eloquent every feature, of benignity and love! Yet what a subdued and indefinable sadness mantles that wondrous countenance! What words of solemn grandeur and holy tenderness drop from those beautiful lips! How eagerly all ears are listening to catch their gracious utterance, and with what an intense gaze all eyes are fixed upon the speaker! It is the "Man of Sorrows," with his sorrowful disciples. He knows that his hour is come. It is the last night. To-morrow morning, he must take his cross, and go to Calvary. "Having loved his own which were in the world," now that he is about to leave them, "he loves them to the end." He has collected them together for a final interview. It is the time of the passover. He would eat with them the paschal lamb, before he goes "as a lamb to the

slaughter." During the feast he discourses to them in a strain of marvellous and melancholy sweetness. "Never man spake like this man:" never spake this man before as he speaks to-night. Never had his words so vast a weight, nor his tone so rich a melody. Turn to the Gospel of Saint John. Read the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters. Was there ever such a colloquy of friends? Was there ever such a valedictory of pastor to his flock? Was ever such consolation breathed over sorrowing hearts? Was ever sermon fraught with so divine a pathos? Proceed to the seventeenth chapter. Was there ever such a prayer—so comprehensive, so affectionate, so beautiful, and so sublime?

Judas Iscariot has left the company. Whither he has gone, and for what purpose, none but the Master knows. His omniscient eye follows the traitor, and sees the damning contract. He rises from supper. The eleven join him in "one of the songs of Zion." It is the great *Hallel* sung at every paschal feast. With what a sweet, sad echo that last hymn floats off upon the night-wind! Never were the words of David sung with a truer meaning and deeper devotion, since he sung them to his own lyre. It is ended. They are on their way out of the city. Jerusalem is thronged with strangers, come up from every quarter, and from many distant lands, to keep the Passover. There is no room for Jesus and his disciples. But he has other reasons for retiring beyond the wall. It is the last night, and he would spend it alone with his loving Father and his few beloved friends. The hour of his final suffering is near, and he would prepare by meditation and prayer for the dread endurance. Judas has received the silver, and with his band of Roman ruffians will soon be on his way to the garden; and Jesus would go to meet them in a quiet and secluded place, that his apprehension may occasion no tumult, nor shedding of blood, nor disturbance of the slumbering city. They pass through the eastern gate. Be-

fore them, in its silent beauty, rises the green slope of Olivet, gilded by the silvery moon. At their feet, in deep shade, through a narrow valley, wanders the Kedron southward, murmuring among the echoing tombs of the Jewish fathers—hero, and prophet, and monarch, and martyr—who have slept for centuries there.

Lo! they descend the declivity—the Shepherd with his “little flock.” He is speaking to them. He is saying something evidently of very surprising import. Let us draw near and listen. “All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written—I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” Can they believe the startling announcement? One of their number is gone—they suspect not whither, nor for what; but are not all the rest true to their Lord? Is there any symptom of infidelity, or even of doubt? They have long been with him: will they forsake him now? What danger can so affright them? What sorrow can so discourage them? What misfortune can break up so suddenly that tender and holy friendship? What indignity can make them blush so soon to own a Master they love so well? Can they forget the Lake of Tiberias, where he came walking the waves to their rescue? Can they forget the Galilean hill, where he fed the multitude with bread of his own immediate creation? Can they forget the mountain, where his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment became white as the light, while he talked with Moses and Elias? Can they forget the grave at Bethany, the bier at the gate of Nain, or the solemn and consoling converse they have just had with him at the table? Surely, if they would ever cleave to Jesus, it will be to-night. Surely, all that has so recently occurred must strengthen their attachment and confirm their confidence. So they feel, and so they speak. Loud above all the rest swells the brave protest of Peter:—“Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I!” Alas! he knows not

his own weakness, nor the power of temptation by which he is soon to be tried. Christ repeats the warning in a still more impressive manner; and assures him, with solemn emphasis, that this very night he will deny him thrice. The self-confident disciple, grieved that his fidelity should be suspected, exclaims more vehemently than before—"Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee!" So answer all the rest, for they are alike unconscious of guile, and ignorant of the fiery trial that awaits them. But an hour or two shall test their firmness and their courage. Jesus is approaching the wine-press, and the Scripture must needs be fulfilled:—"I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."

They are come to the Kedron. David crossed it in sorrow a thousand years before, flying from Absalom and the insurgents. Now the Son of David crosses it, perhaps by the very same path, to await the traitor and his band. They enter a garden just at the foot of the mountain. In a garden the first Adam was assailed by the tempter: in a garden the Second Adam must battle with his host. In a garden the first human sin was committed: in a garden all human sin must be expiated. In a garden our ruin was accomplished; in a garden our redemption must be begun. It is called Gethsemane—the garden of the wine-press; and there it is that the immaculate humanity of Jesus shall be bruised in the wine-press of Almighty God.

Thus far the eleven have attended their Lord. He would take them into the scene of danger, to show them their weakness. He would give them a distant view of his sufferings, the better to prepare them for their own. He would let them see with what firmness he can endure, and thus fortify them against fear in the sore conflicts they have soon to experience. But they cannot witness all. They have scarcely entered the enclosure, when he saith to them—"Sit ye here, while I go

and pray yonder." Peter and James and John are permitted to accompany him a little farther. None but these three were present at the resuscitation of Jairus's daughter; no eyes but theirs gazed upon the glories of the transfiguration; and they alone can be admitted to a nearer view of that mysterious agony. They have seen something of the power of his Godhead: they must see something of the weakness of his manhood. They have witnessed his glory: they must witness his humiliation. The former spectacle was the preparative for the latter. Perhaps they have more to suffer than the rest, and need peculiar influences to fortify them. Perhaps they are more inclined to self-reliance, and need special conviction of their infirmity.

As soon as they have left the eight behind, Jesus begins "to be sore amazed, and very heavy." It is the commencement of those "unknown sorrows and sufferings, by him felt, but to us incomprehensible." "A horror of great darkness" falls upon him—a depression of feeling which no language may define—a mental anguish too keen for human conception. He must needs withdraw himself from the three friends whom he has brought so far. Grief naturally courts seclusion; and never was there grief like his. He would bury his groans in the bosom of the night, and conceal his tears with her veil. Many a time have the floods compassed him about; but now the waters are come in unto his soul. Many a gloomy cloud has overcast him; but now he is enveloped in the very blackness of darkness. Many an empoisoned arrow has wounded him; but now the powers of hell level against him their heaviest artillery. He saith to the favorite three—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What language for the Son of God! "sorrowful"—"exceeding sorrowful"—"sorrowful, even unto death!" "The hour and the power of darkness" are upon him. How can the three endure to witness what he is destined to suffer? "Tarry ye here,"

saith he, "and watch"—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." They have their several errands at the Throne of Grace; but his is peculiar now, and they may not accompany him thither. They cannot sympathize with the Almighty Sufferer, and a nearer sight of his sufferings might be too much for their feeble faith. Withdrawing from them "about a stone's cast," he kneels amid the shrubbery, in the shade of a spreading olive tree. Hark! "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"

O Jesus! what means that deprecation? Wouldst thou abandon the work thou hast begun? Didst thou come into the world to save sinners; and wouldst thou now shrink from the sacrifice by which it is to be accomplished? Hast thou done and suffered so much already, and now, just on the verge of victory, wouldst thou retire from the contest, and allow hell to triumph over thy thwarted mercy and our ruined humanity? O, no! It is only the man's natural shrinking from pain—the shrinking of a sinless man from such pain as man never yet has borne. The desire and the resolve of the indwelling God, to meet and to exhaust for us the curse we have incurred, is the same now as when he left the throne and seraphs sang over the manger; but his humanity trembles with the dread foreboding, and staggers beneath its unknown weight of woe. There seems to be a conflict between the infinite love of the Godhead, and the natural aversion of the manhood to suffering; and the greater that conflict, the more wonderful the subsequent submission, obedience, fortitude, and final triumph of his love.

Now he returns to the three disciples, finds them sleeping for sorrow, rouses them with a kind remonstrance, retires again, and repeats the prayer. Once more he comes to the disciples; once more he gently chides their unwatchfulness; then, once more, prostrate on the dew-damp earth, the Well-Beloved entreats the loving Father. And this time he is

“in an agony”—O what an agony is that! And “he prays more earnestly”—who shall tell with what soul-consuming fervors, what strong “crying and tears!” “And his sweat is as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Instances there have been of perspiration tinged with blood, from great terror and mental anguish, in the hour of death. But here is a man in perfect health, with a mind of serenest majesty, and as innocent as the angels in heaven, who has faced death in a hundred forms, and always shown himself superior to fear. Yet such is the depth and intenseness of his distress, as to wring the blood from out his veins, till it rolls in “great drops” from his temples, and impurples the green earth whereon he lies.

It is midnight. Silence reigns in the city. The faint murmur of the Kedron is the only sound that mingles with the groans and sighs of Gethsemane. The disciples are all sleeping; but there is no sleep to-night for the Son of God. Thrice has the prayer been offered; but it is yet unanswered. Myriads of angels are in attendance; and demons from out the bottomless pit, more numerous than the leaves that overshadow him, surround the writhing Sufferer, all waiting to witness the issue. Great God! what shall that issue be? Infinite interests are depending. Shall the cup pass? Shall the pledge and the prophecy fail? Shall the enterprise prove an abortion, alike dishonorable to God and ruinous to man? Shall the angels that attended the Redeemer down from heaven, and have hitherto ministered to the Son of Man, return thither in silence and in shame? Shall the joyful announcement of so many holy seers be falsified, and the sublime significance of so many types and shadows be contradicted, and the faith in which so many saints have fallen asleep turn out a delusion? O! must hell triumph over Incarnate Love, and earth bewail her blasted hopes, and heaven hang up its harps unstrung for ever?

Lo, the rush of pinions, a gleam through the emerald foliage, and a mighty angel stands beside the Sufferer. What is his errand? Comes he to remove the cup? Then descend, ye spirits of just men made perfect, and sit in the darkness of the pit for ever; for the prey shall not be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall never be delivered! Then shout, ye demons; and mourn, ye morning stars; and fold your wings upon your faces, ye hitherto joyous seraphim, and weep and wail till heaven resounds with one far-spreading lamentation; and let Mercy put on sackcloth, and sprinkle her beamy locks with ashes, and retire in tears from a world she could not save, and take her melancholy way, through a universe hung with mourning, into returnless exile!

O, no! He comes not to remove the cup, but to strengthen the victim, that he may drain it to the dregs. He comes not to release him from the burden, but to sustain him under its pressure. He must suffer, or man is lost. He might call twelve legions of angels to his rescue; but here is only one to succor him with his sympathy. The ministration of physical help is not the Sufferer's need. His anguish is the anguish of the soul, and to the soul the angel addresses his aid. How sweetly he discourses of the triumph that awaits him, of the joy that is set before him!—the triumph of his certain resurrection and ascension; the joy of his Father's approval and his people's love; the outburst of new songs in heaven; the effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh; his gospel published in all lands; his dominion established for all time; ransomed millions, far down the vista of future ages, pressing into the kingdom; the saints of successive generations, century after century, redeemed by the sore travail of his soul, coming home to the celestial Zion; and then, the last enemy conquered, and surrendering his last captive to the Conqueror; and myriads, born to immortality from out the tomb, in one vast procession, with the Captain of their salvation in their van—

with harps, and trumps, and palms, and crowns—marching to the metropolis of his empire, “the City of the Great King,” and waking the echoes of unnumbered worlds as they pass with their jubilant “Hosannas in the highest!”

It is enough! The fainting spirit is refreshed. “Father, thy will be done!” The tremor is over. The Sufferer rises, and wipes from his brow the crimson dew. His features resume their wonted serenity. It was a mighty struggle; but it is ended, and heaven retunes its myriad harps to sing

“The triumph of sorrow, the triumph of love!”

This amazing scene furnishes indubitable proof of our Saviour’s proper humanity. In the bloody sweat we see the weakness of a human body. In the mental anguish which caused it we see the writhings of a human soul. There is no other explanation of the phenomenon. It has been supposed by some that the person of Christ consisted of a human body without a human soul—that his human body was quickened by the superior spiritual nature, the Divine Logos, that dwelt in it as in a temple. But if our Lord had not a conscious and rational soul, besides that celestial nature, how shall we account for his mental depression and anguish? How could Essential Blessedness be “exceeding sorrowful?” How could Infinite Intelligence be “sore amazed?” How could the Creator be strengthened by a creature? How could the Sustainer of all receive succor from one constantly dependent upon his sustaining power? These questions can be answered only by admitting that Christ was truly man, with man’s physical infirmities, and mental faculties, and moral feelings.

II. Let us now reverently inquire into THE PECULIAR NATURE OF OUR SAVIOUR’S AGONY. What was the cause, and what was the character of that intense mental conflict, which he anticipated so fearfully, and deprecated so earnestly—

which forced the purple life from out its channels, and required the succor of angelic sympathy?

Was it *the remorse of guilt*? This is what none but the guilty can experience; but Christ "did no iniquity." There was not a stain upon his human soul, nor a moral shadow upon his life. If he had been a sinner, he could not be the Saviour of other sinners. To say that he suffered remorse for the sins of men in the character of a substitute, is too absurd to require refutation.

Was it *the fear of his enemies*? All power was his in heaven and in earth. Why should he fear the worms he has formed, whose breath he inspires, whose blood he propels, whose very souls he sustains in being? Let them surround him by thousands; he can pass through their midst again, and go his way; or call down fire from heaven upon them; or make the earth open her mouth and devour them; or paralyze the tongue that speaks against him, or the hand stretched forth to seize him. He has seen times apparently of more immediate personal danger than this; but who ever knew him to quail before the malice of persecution, or the menace of power?

Was it *the terror of a cruel death*? To die, he came into the world. To be capable of dying, he assumed our mortal nature. From the first, he knew the necessity of his death, and distinctly foresaw its mode, and all its circumstances of torture and of shame. Yet he consented to it: he rejoiced in the prospect. From the throne of the universe he beheld a cross erected on Calvary; and to embrace that cross he abdicated that throne. His views and feelings are still unchanged, and Golgotha acquires no terror from its contiguity. The fear of death? then has the Master less fortitude than his martyrs. The fear of death? then is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" less a hero than many a warrior, than many a savage. The fear of death? that were dishonorable even to his man-

hood, to say nothing of the Godhead by which it is sustained. Why should he fear death, who is himself the resurrection and the life? Why should he fear death, who knows that it is the way to eternal blessedness and glory, and that in less than three days he shall live to die no more? Why should he fear death, who by dying is to destroy him that hath the power of death, and make earth's cemeteries the seed-fields of immortality?

Was it *the displeasure of the Eternal Father*? The thought is blasphemy. The Eternal Father calls the Incarnate Son his "Well-Beloved;" and testifies at his baptism and his transfiguration that in him "he is ever well pleased." God can be angry with none but sinners; but his Son has never sinned. To say that God was angry with his Son as the substitute for human sinners, is to contradict all that the Scriptures say of his infinite love in sending "his Son to be the Saviour of the world." What! does not the Father concur with the Son in his great enterprise of recovering mercy? Has he not commissioned him with this errand of redemption, and promised to reward his obedience unto death with the glories of a universal and everlasting sovereignty? And will he now be angry with the Innocent, whom he himself has appointed the legal substitute for the guilty, with so mighty an indemnity for the suffering he must endure in that relation? Is the great God so capricious and changeful—so unreasonable and unjust? O, no! He was never better pleased with his Son than when he said—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" God was never better pleased with his Son than when he exclaimed—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow!" God was never better pleased with his Son than when he saw him convulsed with agony and crimsoned with blood in Olivet, and sent an angel to his succor.

Was it *the penalty of God's violated law*? So it is often

said in the pulpit; but never in the Holy Scriptures. I have seen it stated that Christ suffered, both in kind and in amount, the exact penalty of the law—just what the sinner deserved to suffer, and all that he deserved to suffer—the entire punishment, in intensity and extent, which the whole multitude of his redeemed must have experienced if they had been damned for evermore! Even so great and good a man as the late Dr. Chalmers teaches this frightful theory. One theological writer maintains that the sufferings of Christ in Gethsemane were the actual pains of hell, and more in amount than all the myriads of fallen angels and accursed human spirits can possibly suffer to all eternity! The theory is this:—That Christ, as the sinner's Surety, stands before the Eternal Judge, laden with the sins of all his people: that their guilt is all imputed to him, and he is treated as if he had committed them all himself: that he endures, in all its fearfulness, their proper punishment—an amount of vengeance equal to the eternal damnation of the whole human race: that Divine Justice gathers all the curses of the violated law into one huge avenging bolt, which, falling elsewhere, would annihilate angels and men, and burn up the universe, and hurls it flaming down upon the soul of our Surety! The statement of such a theory is its refutation. It makes the Son of God a sinner, and God angry with his Son. We know not, indeed, what exquisite refinement of anguish the God-man endured in the garden: we know not how many bitter ingredients were wrung into that single cup which he prayed might pass from him; but there was certainly no necessity that his sufferings should be infinite, since it was the majesty of the Sufferer—not the amount of suffering—that rendered the dread endurance sufficiently meritorious for our redemption. Nor was it possible that his sufferings should be the exact penalty of the law. The penalty of the law is eternal death; and to endure eternal death, Christ

must be suffering yet, and never cease to suffer. Evidently, no being could suffer more than one eternal death, for one eternal death would occupy the whole of eternity; but to suffer all the punishment due to all the sinners he redeemed, Christ must suffer as many eternal deaths as there are redeemed sinners.

A book has been written to prove *that Christ suffered in his Divine nature*, as well as in the human; that the Eternal Logos did actually endure an inconceivable amount of pain and anguish. The argument is an elaborate failure. The author attempts to maintain, that inasmuch as the sufferings of Christ are predicated of him as one person, and inasmuch as this one person is compounded of two natures, therefore both natures must have suffered. On the same principle, we might prove that when it is said our Saviour was "thirty years of age," the statement includes both natures, and makes the Divinity as young as the humanity. In the same manner it might be shown that the Godhead hungered and thirsted, ate and drank, was weary and slept, actually died upon the cross, and left the universe three days without a father! The doctrine that the Divine nature of Jesus suffered is not sustained by any declaration of Holy Scripture, nor can it be deduced thence by any fair process of reasoning. The suffering of the Logos was unnecessary; for, as the two natures constituted but one person, the suffering of the inferior nature must be as meritorious as if the superior itself had suffered. Indeed, the thing was naturally impossible; for one of the essential attributes of an infinite Spirit must be perfect blessedness; and perfect blessedness is incompatible, not only with actual suffering, but even with the possibility of suffering.

It has been supposed that Emmanuel's mental anguish was *the grief of his pure and benevolent human heart for a sinful and suffering world*, and especially for the Jewish people; and that his intense love and solicitude, his agony of inter-

cession for sinners, was more than his human nature could support without celestial succor. It is very likely that these were drops of bitterness in his cup; but these were not all the bitter portion. It is very likely that the vision of Jerusalem's guilt, and "the wrath unto the uttermost" that was soon to come upon the chosen people; their unbelief, and blind rejection of the gospel, and obstinate adherence to an abrogated and soulless ceremonial, and all their woes for so many centuries of crime and retribution; with all the wickedness of the Gentile world, the delusions of idolatry, the blasphemy and sacrilege of superstition, the wanton revelry of vice, and suffering of persecuted virtue; the general profligacy, and forgetfulness of God, and bitter scorn of the blood-sealed Testament of his dying love; and the horror and hopelessness of guilty death-beds, and the desolations of war and pestilence, and all the judgments of Heaven poured out upon successive generations of ungodliness, and the whole panorama of human misery down to the end of time, and the weeping and wailing that ascend evermore from the place of final punishment;—it is very likely that all this passed before the omniscient spirit of our Saviour in Gethsemane, and constituted one cause of his inconceivable sorrow. But there was a still deeper and more mysterious significance in his agony. A heavier burden pressed him to the earth, and forced the red drops steaming from out his blessed heart.

Dr. Lightfoot and others have conjectured that the agony of Jesus in the garden was *a struggle with the prince of darkness*: that Satan met him there in a very terrific bodily shape; that it was through this apparition he "began to be sore amazed and very heavy," and that it was against this "angel of the bottomless pit" the "angel from heaven" appeared to strengthen him. It is quite reasonable to suppose that a conflict with the Wicked One, though perhaps entirely of a mental character, was a considerable source of

the suffering here recorded. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. This single aim has occupied his heart, his head, his hands, ever since he entered the world. The decisive struggle is near. To-morrow, on Mount Calvary, the victory shall be consummated. To-morrow, on Mount Calvary, he shall bruise the old serpent's head, beyond all power of healing. He shall come up from the garden, "with dyed garments," "travelling in the greatness of his strength," and "mighty to save;" and he shall trample the hosts of hell "in his anger, and make them drunk in his fury; for the day of vengeance is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed is come;" and he shall "spoil principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them" by his cross, and leading captive the captivity of his people. This is the victory anticipated in his late announcement: "Now is the prince of this world judged: now shall he be cast out." Satan knows his assailant, and trembles for his throne. He gathers all his forces to Gethsemane, and plies the Son of God with his heaviest artillery. Does not Saint Luke refer to this very night, when he says that "the devil, having ended all the temptation, departed from him for a season?" Is not that season now accomplished, and is not this the time of the fiend's return? Is not this "the hour and the power of darkness," from which he prayed the Father to save him? Is not this the long-foreboded advent of "the prince of this world" against the Champion of our hopes? True, "he hath nothing" in Christ—no fallen nature on which he can work, no sinful passion to which he can appeal, no principle of evil ready to act as his ally, no possible means of diverting him from his purpose, or defeating his redemption of our race; yet he can inflict upon that sinless human soul an inconceivable amount of suffering; and feeling the utter hopelessness of his own cause, and foreseeing the speedy subversion of his own empire, he gathers up all his strength,

and assails his Conqueror with all the virulence of infernal hate, with all the fury of a desperate revenge, till the appeal to the Father and the sweat of blood bring down the angel, not to release from the conflict, but to strengthen for the victory.

But little need be said concerning what has all along been anticipated, though it is by far the most important point of all; namely, *the vicarious and sacrificial character of the sufferings of our Lord*. The Scripture proof is ample, that he suffered in our stead, as our substitute, to atone for our sins, and procure our salvation. Take the following from Isaiah:—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Take the following from Saint Paul:—"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." To the same purport speak Saint John and Saint Peter:—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." What do these passages express, if not the doctrine of substitution and atonement? What do these inspired men intend to teach, if not that Christ suffered in our place, to procure our pardon? And was it only upon the cross that it pleased the Father "to bruise him," to "put him to grief," to "make his soul an offering for sin?" His sufferings began with his human life,

and all that he suffered was for human guilt. Almost every variety of affliction—hunger and thirst, poverty and scorn, calumny and reproach, weariness of body and anguish of soul, malice of enemies and faithlessness of friends, the persecution of men in power and the assaults of “wicked spirits in high places”—perhaps all that humanity is liable to suffer, except remorse of conscience and the wrath of God—was wrung into his single cup. But now he suffers as he never suffered before. In the whole history of his sorrows, from its beginning in Bethlehem to its conclusion in Calvary, there is not another scene like this. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow” in Gethsemane! Is it not now that he “bears the sins of many?” Is it not now that he is “stricken for the transgressions of his people?” Is it not now that he begins to “pour out his soul unto death?” Is it not now that one mighty instalment of the vast redemption-price is demanded, and paid down by our Surety? Why that sore amazement? Is it not the anticipated “chastisement of our peace?” Why that mental heaviness? Is it not the laying on of “the iniquity of us all?” Why that exceeding sorrow? Is it not the Almighty putting “him to grief?” Why that bloody perspiration? Is it not the Father bruising his Well-Beloved in the wine-press? Why that mysterious agony? Is it not “the travail of his soul” for the recovery of ours? Why that angelic sympathy? Is it not the mingled cup of our woes put into his hand—the cup from which humanity recoils, but which cannot pass away? O, yes! He suffers for human sinners; and though his sufferings are not the exact penalty of guilt, not the precise amount of punishment due for crime, yet they are a perfect and satisfactory substitute for all the pain that every human sinner deserves to endure. The claims of the Divine law are as strongly asserted, and the principles of the Divine administration are as

thoroughly vindicated, in the sufferings of the Substitute, as they could have been in the sufferings of the sinner; and in virtue of this great Sacrifice, the sinner may be pardoned, without the slightest infringement of the Eternal Holiness and Justice. The Father's infliction of anguish—anguish the most excruciating and indescribable—upon the sinner's Substitute, though that Substitute is his own beloved Son, is a more appalling exhibition of his invincible hatred to sin, and his inflexible purpose to punish the transgressor—a more emphatic assertion of his high regard for his own righteous government, and his jealousy for the purity and happiness of his intelligent universe—a more powerful appeal to the moral sensibilities of man, a mightier prevention of vice, and stronger regard to virtue—than could have been furnished to other worlds in the eternal damnation of the whole human race. Had all the teeming millions of earth's fallen population been “cast alive into the lake of fire,” their hopeless anguish would have been a far less striking display of the Divine Holiness than the “agony and bloody sweat” of Jehovah's Fellow in Gethsemane; and their “weeping and wailing” through unknown ages of reverseless doom, would have been a far less terrific demonstration of the Divine justice than the supplication of the Well-Beloved Sufferer—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” Doubtless Jesus endured as keen, if not as complicate, an anguish, when he lay struggling upon the turf, as when he hung writhing upon the tree; and if the mighty atonement, which reconciles Heaven and earth, was completed on Calvary, it was at least begun in Gethsemane.

“The man of sorrow now
He doth indeed appear,
Beneath my guilty burden bow,
And tremble with my fear.

“His pain is my relief,
And doth my load remove;
For, O, if all his soul is grief,
Yet all his heart is love!”

How should this view of my Saviour's sufferings imbitter to me my sins, and sweeten my cup of sorrows! How highly should I estimate “that price—all price beyond”—by which my poor soul is ransomed from endless suffering! How faithfully should I imitate the beautiful example of fortitude, submission, and holy trust, which his recorded sufferings furnish! What love and gratitude should I cherish toward such a friend—what a joyful willingness to suffer for him “who trembled, wept, and bled for me!” And O, what bliss will it be, when all the sufferings of earth are over, to behold in heaven the glorified Sufferer for my sins; and, as one of his redeemed, to be glorified with him for evermore! But if I “neglect so great salvation”—if I spurn the mercy procured for me at so incalculable a cost—how deep my stupidity, how base my ingratitude, how fearful my amount of guilt, and how intolerable the cup of vengeance I must drink in hell!

VII.—THE GREAT SUBSTITUTION.

THE Cross is the standard of Christianity—"the fountain-light of all our day"—the constant theme of prophetic song—the subject of apostolic preaching and glorying—the central point around which gathered the affections and hopes of the primitive believers—the grand vital truth for which they bore to live and dared to die. What is our religion without its High-priest and its Sacrifice? What avails it that the Son of God entered our world and assumed our nature—that he set us an example of perfect obedience and patient suffering—that he revealed the will of the Father, and died in attestation of his doctrine—if he did not also atone for our sins, and provide for our complete and everlasting restoration to the forfeited favor and image of God? This was our greatest need; and this—thanks to his infinite love—was the main object of his advent. For this he left his throne, and relinquished his glory, and took the form of a servant, and lived a life of sorrow, and poured out his soul unto death.

Of the nature and extent of his sufferings, it becomes us to speak with deference. Some of them were very mysterious and quite incomprehensible. We know, however, that his sufferings were not the sufferings of his Godhead, for a nature essentially blessed must be superior to the possibility of pain; nor the remorse of a sinner, for a being who has never sinned can never experience remorse; nor the displeasure of the Father, for the Father declares himself ever well pleased in

his Son ; nor the penalty of the law, for the penalty of the law is everlasting exclusion from happiness and hope. There is a theory which represents him as enduring all that was due to all the sinners for whom he suffered—paying down in his own person, as the price of their pardon, the full sum of anguish that Justice would have exacted of them. From this view we are obliged to dissent. It was naturally impossible ; for every human sinner deserves eternal death ; and to suffer all the desert of every human sinner, Christ must suffer eternal death multiplied by the whole number of human sinners. It would have been obviously unjust ; for the sufferings of Christ were infinitely more valuable than the sufferings of all the sinners in the universe ; and to require of him, as man's substitute, all that would have been required of man, would be to require more than an equivalent, like requiring for a given quantity of earth an equal quantity of gold. And it was as unnecessary as it would have been unjust ; for a sinless being cannot be obliged to suffer, and his voluntary suffering for the good of others must be meritorious, and the union of the Divine Nature with the human in the person of the sufferer must render the merit infinite ; so that a much less amount of suffering in the God-man than was due to the whole human race would be sufficient satisfaction for their sin, and to exact more than was sufficient would be contrary alike to wisdom and to goodness.

Of the extent of the Saviour's sufferings we are nowhere informed in Scripture. Nor is the information necessary to our comfort and assurance. It is not the keenness of anguish, nor the depth of infamy, but the sinlessness of the victim, and the glorious dignity of his nature, that renders his vicarious undertaking meritorious, even to the satisfaction of Divine Justice, and the expiation of human guilt. We know, indeed, that his sufferings were various, continued, and inconceivably dreadful ; that he bore all the innocent infirmities of

our fallen nature; that his life was one of poverty and unparalleled tribulation; that confederate men and devils pursued him with unspeakable malice from the manger to the tree; that he endured great bodily pain and peculiar mental anguish; that he suffered from sympathy with the afflicted, and from compassion for the guilty; that he agonized in Olivet till he perspired blood, and angelic agency was necessary for his succor; that he was most ungratefully treated by his own beloved disciples—betrayed by one, denied by another, forsaken of all; that, without a crime, and with only the mockery of a trial, he was condemned to death with the vilest criminals, in a manner the most excruciating and ignominious that human skill and diabolic hate could invent; that he bore the torture of the thorn, the scourge, the spike, the spear, and all the complication and refinement of anguish comprehended in a Roman crucifixion, aggravated by the taunts of the triumphant priesthood, the jeers of the ruffian soldiery, and the bitter scorn of the multitude; that, amidst his innumerable woes, the Eternal Father withdrew the light of his countenance, and left his Well-Beloved to tread the wine-press alone, and wrestle out the ransom of mankind in tears and blood, while mute nature mourned in sympathy, and the insensate rocks shuddered with horror, and the saints awoke from out their sepulchres; and it is enough for us to know that these “unknown sorrows and sufferings—by him felt, but to us incomprehensible”—were such, both in kind and degree, as to constitute an ample atonement for the sins of men, and render the proffer of forgiveness to all penitent believers consistent with every principle of the moral government of God.

Some imagine that Christ suffered merely as a martyr, in attestation of the truth which he taught, and as an example of finished virtue to his followers. How does this opinion agree with the following language of Isaiah? “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our ini-

quities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* The chapter from which this passage is quoted has been called “The True Crucifix.” That it relates to Christ and his sufferings, no believer in the New Testament can doubt. Written more than seven centuries before the events which it describes, history itself could scarcely be more accurate and explicit. It is the text from which Philip preached Christ in the Ethiopian chariot ; and it is quoted by Peter, with the same application, in the second chapter of his first epistle. It would be difficult to express, with greater clearness and strength than it is here expressed by the prophet, the vicarious and sacrificial character of the sufferings of Christ. The language evidently implies the substitution of Christ for the sinner—the substitution of his voluntary sufferings for the sinner’s deserved punishment—in consideration of which the sinner may be accepted of God, and freely forgiven. We shall endeavor to show that this view agrees with the teachings of the New Testament. The proof may be distinguished into two kinds :—*The Incidental Evidence of Facts*, and *The Explicit Verbal Testimony of Heaven*.

I. Beginning with the former, let it be observed that Christ was a *sinless sufferer*. His accusers proved nothing against him. His judges found “no fault in him.” Judas confessed that he had “betrayed innocent blood.” Demons acknowledged him “The Holy One of God.” The Father declared himself “well pleased” in his Son. The prophet testifies that “he did no iniquity, neither was there any deceit in his mouth.” The apostle describes him as “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” And yet he suf-

* Isaiah liii. 5, 6.

ferred. He suffered voluntarily. He suffered without obligation. He suffered what he might have avoided. It was not forced upon him by power. It did not overtake him by surprise. He foresaw all. He predicted all. He chose to suffer. "He went as a lamb to the slaughter." He embraced the felon's cross with joy. It was love that sustained him—love that impelled him—love for perishing sinners. It was "for the joy that was set before him," in the future blessedness of redeemed millions, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame."

Here is a most remarkable fact; and, on any other supposition than that of substitution and sacrifice, wholly inexplicable. Why did Jesus suffer? He had no sin of his own to suffer for. He must have suffered for the sins of others. It has been alleged to be unreasonable and unjust that the innocent should suffer for the guilty. Nay, is it not unreasonable and unjust that the innocent should suffer at all? Is not all suffering the fruit of sin? Would there have been any suffering, had there been no sin? Why then should he suffer who has never sinned? All suffering is either corrective or punitive. Jesus has no fault to correct, no guilt to punish. And yet he suffers. Why this anomaly? As far as we know, it is the only instance in the universe. All other sufferers are sinners. But here is a sinless sufferer. Here is the immaculate Son of God, suffering as if he were the chief of sinners. And it is the Father who has "bruised" him. It is the Father who has "wounded" him. It is the Father who has "put him to grief." It is the Father who has "made his soul a sacrifice." The Father is "well pleased" with him; yet he is "smitten of God and afflicted." The Father loves him with an infinite love; yet he is treated as the object of an intense displeasure. He needs no correction, deserves no punishment; yet he endures an inconceivable anguish—yet he bears an insupport-

able burden. Explain this paradox. Solve this enigma. It is utterly impossible, unless you admit the doctrine of atonement.

Bear in mind, also, that Christ was crucified for claiming *equality with God*—for claiming the titles, honors, attributes, and prerogatives of God. His enemies protested against the claim, and accused the claimant of blasphemy. He admitted the fact, but denied the deduction. He reëffirmed and vindicated his claim. That claim was true or false. If false, Christ was an impostor. If Christ was an impostor, the New Testament is a forgery, and Christianity a cheat. Who of us is prepared for such a conclusion? Who doubts the truth and inspiration of the Evangelical Record? Who does not believe Christ to be “a teacher come from God?” But if we admit this, we must admit also the truth of his doctrine and the correctness of his claim. Then, what an astonishing spectacle have we in the suffering Jesus! “God manifest in the flesh” sweating “great drops of blood!” “God manifest in the flesh” expiring upon the malefactor’s cross! How the wonder heightens! It is not merely an innocent man suffering voluntarily and by Divine appointment. It is God himself, suffering in human nature. And for what purpose, if not for the expiation of human guilt? Philosophy can develop no other. Christianity assigns no other. God became man, that he might be man’s substitute. Messiah was “cut off, but not for himself.”

This argument is strengthened by *the peculiar circumstances* which attended his sufferings. Why that mysterious agony? Why that complaint of desertion? What martyr ever sweat blood from fear? What good man was ever forsaken of God in his last moments? Was there not something peculiar in his passion—something anomalous and transcendent in its design? Was it merely to attest the truth of his teaching, and furnish his people an example of heroic patience? Utterly incredible and absurd! And what means that promise

to his penitent fellow-sufferer—that promise which none but a God could make? Why, amid the anguish and horror of that awful hour, did he open paradise to a departing soul? Was it not designed as an expression of the vicarious and expiatory nature of his death? And whence that three-hours preternatural darkness? Why frowned the heavens? Why quaked the earth? Why clave the rocks? Why rent the vail of the temple? Why opened the graves of the saints? What martyr's anguish ever elicited such sympathy from nature? What prophet's mission ever won such attestation from the dead? What mean these marvels, if there was nothing of extraordinary significance in the sufferings which they signalized?

And why did Christ institute *a memorial of his passion* in the Holy Supper, and command his disciples to continue it till his second coming? Why did he select, for constant commemoration by his Church, the most humiliating fact in his whole history—that of his crucifixion? Why not rather his birth, which brought the angels down from heaven? Why not his baptism, which brought the Holy Spirit down from heaven? Why not the resuscitation of Lazarus, or of the ruler's daughter, or of the widow's son? Why not his own resurrection or ascension? Why did he pass by all the imposing events and stupendous miracles of his life, and fix upon a passage which the Jew would scorn and the Gentile would ridicule? Why did he rear an ignominious Cross as the rallying-point of his people's hopes, and the object of his people's glorying? Why, if his death, like that of the prophets and apostles, was only a testimony to the truth, and a pattern of meek endurance for his disciples? Why, if there was no atoning virtue in his mangled body and his streaming blood?

And why do the Holy Scriptures lay *so much stress* upon the sufferings of Christ, in connection with the salvation of man? Why is our salvation constantly associated with the

merit of his passion? Why not rather with his birth, his baptism, his ministry, his miracles, his example? Is it not that he suffered in our stead? Otherwise, how could there be any saving virtue in his sufferings? The force of this argument has been felt and acknowledged even by those who deny the doctrine of substitution. That great exponent of "Unitarian Christianity," the late Dr. Channing, makes the remarkable admission—"That the Scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to the death of Christ, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment." His ingenuous mind overleaped the barriers of his theory. Had he but apprehended fully the blessed truth so clearly stated by the prophet!—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

II. But let us come to THE MORE DIRECT AND EXPLICIT TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE. Let us classify the passages and expressions which relate to the sufferings of Christ, and see if they do not furnish indubitable evidence of a substitution for sinners, and a satisfaction for sin.

Take the statements which are merely *historical*. How are we "reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son," and how does Christ "destroy the Devil through *death*?" Why is it not his life? How does he "make peace through the blood of his *cross*," and "reconcile both Jews and Gentiles unto God by his *cross*?" Why is it not his crown or his sceptre? Why does Paul determine to know nothing among his brethren but "Christ *crucified*?" Why not Christ born, or Christ baptized? Why does he asseverate so solemnly his glorying

only "in the *cross* of Christ?" Why not his manger, or his carpenter's tools? Why sing the apocalyptic saints and angels "unto the Lamb that was *slain*?" Why not the Lamb that was raised again, or the Lamb that was glorified? Why are we said to be "redeemed by his *blood*"—"justified by his *blood*"—"washed," "cleansed," "sanctified," "made nigh," and admitted "into the Holiest," all "by his *blood*?" Why not his holy example, his moral teaching, or his miracles? Why so much said of Christ's sufferings, which cannot be said of any other sufferings, nor of any thing else in his own personal history, unless there is some peculiar connection between his sufferings and our salvation—unless they are indeed the meritorious cause of the blessings with which they are thus associated?

Take the expressions relative to *commerce*. What means such language as this?—"Ye are *bought* with a price"—"*purchased* with his own *blood*"—"redeemed with the precious blood of Christ"—"gave his life a *ransom* for all"—"in whom we have *redemption* through his blood." These expressions need but little explanation. Every child knows what it is to buy, to purchase. To ransom or redeem is to buy back, to purchase back. The word is used to express the recovery of an alienated possession, or the release of a captive or a victim, by the payment of a price. The nature of the redemption is to be ascertained from the circumstances of the redeemed. If they are guilty, their redemption is a purchased pardon. If they are slaves of sin, their redemption is a purchased deliverance from the bondage. If they are insolvent debtors, their redemption is a purchased discharge from the obligation. If they are doomed culprits of the law, their redemption is the purchased remission of the deserved penalty. Such, to all who believe, are the benefits of the cross of Christ. Their guilt is pardoned; their yoke is broken; their debt is

cancelled ; their doom is averted ; their heritage is recovered ; and all through the Redeemer's suffering in their stead.

Take the phraseology referring to *sacrifice*. How is Christ "the *high-priest* of our profession"—"a faithful and merciful *high-priest* in things pertaining to God"—if he did not perform on our behalf the priestly office of atonement? How is he the "*Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*," unless "he was led as a Lamb to the slaughter" for the expiation of our offences? What signify these sayings?—"He bore our sins in his own body on the tree"—"once offered to bear the sins of many"—"offered one *sacrifice* for sins"—"put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself"—"gave himself for us an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God"—"Christ our *passover*, *sacrificed* for us"—"made *reconciliation* for the sins of the people"—"a *propitiation* through faith in his blood"—"sanctified through the *offering* of the body of Jesus once for all"—"by one *offering* perfected for ever them that are sanctified"—"through whom we have now received the *atonement*." What means all this, if Christ was not truly both our slaughtered victim and our officiating priest? Read the Epistle to the Hebrews, and tell us how the priesthood of Christ was greater than that of Aaron, and his sacrifice superior to all those of the tabernacle and the temple. Deny the sacrificial character of his sufferings, and the whole epistle is an inexplicable enigma. In short, both Jesus and his apostles apply to his sufferings terms and epithets, commonly employed by both Jew and Gentile, to denote atonement and satisfaction for sin ; and if his sufferings were not vicarious and piacular, they would scarcely have found language better adapted to deceive the minds of men on a subject above all others important to their happiness in time and their hopes for eternity.

Take the particles expressive of *substitution*. There are

three of them in the original, all in our version translated "*for*." "My body broken *for* you"—"my blood shed *for* you"—"lay down my life *for* the sheep"—"once suffered *for* sins, the just *for* the unjust"—"offered *for* us"—"sacrificed *for* us"—"crucified *for* us"—"slain *for* us"—"made sin *for* us"—"made a curse *for* us"—"delivered *for* our offences"—"delivered up *for* us all"—"died *for* us"—"*for* our sins"—"*for* the ungodly"—"*for* all"—"*for* every man." Who does not see in these expressions the doctrine of substitution? The Socinian theory—that Jesus suffered simply as our example, for our improvement—falls far below their meaning. When the prophet says, "The son shall not die for the iniquity of his father," who understands him to mean for his father's example or reformation? When he says, "The wicked man shall die for his own wickedness," who understands him to mean for his own example or reformation? When we say of a murderer, "He dies for his sin," we mean because of his sin—on account of his sin. The particles must have the same sense, when it is said Christ died for our sins. His sufferings bear the same relation to our sins, as ours would have borne had we suffered for them ourselves. His death is an expression of the Divine displeasure against our sins. If he did not die as our substitute, to procure our exemption from punishment, how are we indebted to his death for pardon, any more than to the death of Peter or Paul? Christ suffered in our stead; and we, upon our penitence, are pardoned in consideration of his suffering.

Take the scriptures declaratory of *design*. "The Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the world"—"that the world through him might be *saved*"—"that we might *live* through him"—"might be made the *righteousness* of God in him"—"might *not perish*, but have *eternal life*." Christ gave his flesh "for the *life* of the world"—shed his blood "for the *remission* of sins"—suffered to "*put away sin*"—"to *take*

away sin”—“to *make reconciliation* for sin”—“that he might *bring* us to God”—“*reconcile* us to God”—“*redeem* us from all iniquity”—“*purify* unto himself a peculiar people”—“*sanctify* the people with his own blood.” There is alienation—there is enmity—between God and man. Man hates the holiness of God: God hates the sinfulness of man. Man has violated the law, and God is bound to punish the violation. How is reconciliation to be effected, and amity restored? The innocent must suffer for the guilty. Christ must die for man. Without this, pardon would be impolitic, and an act of mercy to the criminal would be an act of injustice to the universe. Without this, there would be no adequate exhibition of God’s infinite abhorrence of sin, and his righteous determination to punish; and the forgiveness of a single offence would be a universal indulgence to crime. Atonement or vengeance is the stern alternative. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Justice interposes an insuperable barrier between man and mercy. The law must have its demand, either upon the sinner or upon a sinless substitute. The penalty must be levied upon the delinquent, unless satisfaction be rendered by a surety. As well no law as no penalty; as well no threatening as no infliction. But lo! Christ is smitten for us, “and with his stripes we are healed.” His death satisfies the law; renders our salvation consistent with every principle of the Divine government; and demonstrates to men and angels, that while penitence need not despair of forgiveness, incorrigible guilt cannot hope for impunity. This is truly an amazing scheme; by which the greatest possible display of mercy is made also the most illustrious manifestation of justice; by which sin is shown to be an immeasurable evil, salvation an incalculable blessing, and the wisdom as well as the goodness of God

“A vast unfathomable sea,

Where all our thoughts are drowned.”

Take the language indicative of *necessity*.—"The Son of Man *must* suffer many things, and be rejected and killed"—"*must* be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified"—"*must* be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." Why this "*must*," if there was no necessity? "Thus it is written, and thus it *behooved* Christ to suffer." Why? Because it was "written?" But why was it written? Because it was "*expedient* that one should die for the people." Neither the predetermination of God, nor the prediction by the prophet, originated the necessity; but the necessity occasioned both the predetermination and the prediction. But why this original necessity? Because without such an expedient there could be no salvation for sinners. He himself declares his own death as necessary to our salvation as the death of the seed-wheat to the future harvest.* The declaration is confirmed by his prayer in the garden, the night before his crucifixion. The first time he said:—"O my Father! if it be *possible*, let this cup pass from me." The second time he said:—"O my Father! if this cup *may not* pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Why was he not released from the fearful undertaking? Did the Father take pleasure in his anguish? Was the Father indifferent to his cries and tears? Did he bruise his "Well-Beloved," and put his sinless soul to grief, and inflict upon him all those inconceivable tortures, without a necessity? All that we know of God forbids the thought. The cup might "not pass" from Jesus—it was not "*possible*," since man's only hope of mercy lay in his drinking it to the dregs. "It *became* him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering;" that is, to make him a perfect Saviour through suffering—to complete, through suffering, his qualification for his mighty enterprise.

* John xii. 24.

Moral precepts could not save us; virtuous example could not save us; all the wisdom and power of God could not help us without a suffering Saviour. A sacrifice must be offered to appease insulted Justice, and that sacrifice must be of infinite value. "The Prince of Life" must "pour out his soul unto death." There is no other method of saving man, which would not render the sceptre in the hand of God powerless, and the throne whereon he sits insecure. Had God forgiven the offender without satisfaction for the offence, what respect could thenceforth have been felt for his authority, or what reverence would thenceforth have been due to his name? Had he granted a general deed of amnesty, and recalled an alienated world to friendship, without any provision for upholding his own sovereignty, and guarding the purity and happiness of other orders of being, what would his clemency have been, in effect, but a desecration of his character, a degradation of his majesty, a relinquishment of his claim upon the fealty of his subjects, and a proclamation of universal impunity to crime? The precept trampled, and the penalty not executed, would have warranted the belief, in other worlds as well as ours, that the asserted authority would never be enforced—that the published denunciation would never be inflicted—that the transgressor would ever go unpunished; and thus the law of God would have been made a jest, and his government a mockery, as far as the fact was known. But lo, our Substitute appears, and bows himself to the sacrifice; and through the merit of his suffering, the sinner is restored to favor, while an everlasting stigma is fixed upon sin; and the wisdom of God is glorified in the wondrous expedient; and Holiness, and Justice, and Truth are enthroned in vindicated sovereignty by the side of triumphant Mercy. O, blessed solace for the troubled soul! I meet a poor sinner, haunted by the dark imagery of remorse and terror, agonizing with the consciousness of an unsettled controversy between

himself and Heaven, and sinking into utter hopelessness under the dreary prospect of an undone eternity. What shall I say to calm the tempest of his fears, and ease his aching heart? Shall I tell him that God is "good"—"gracious"—"merciful"—"slow to anger"—"kind even to the unthankful and the evil?" Verily, I would tell him this; but I would tell him also that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." I would point to Olivet—I would point to Golgotha, and say:—Poor heavy-laden brother! behold thy Divine Substitute bearing thy griefs, carrying thy sorrows, and receiving the chastisement of thy peace! Behold the law magnified which thou hast violated, the justice propitiated which thou hast insulted, the authority vindicated which thou hast trampled upon, the outraged majesty of Heaven appeased and reconciled, and all those attributes which have hitherto been thy terror and dismay forming into a canopy of defence above thee, and smiling down upon thee with infinite benignity!

We have adduced six classes of New Testament expressions. Any one of them seems sufficient to prove those sufferings vicarious and sacrificial. Concentrate this sixfold evidence, and it becomes overwhelming. The evangelical writers seem to have exhausted their skill in giving variety and intensity to language; and have scarcely left unemployed any possible collocation of words by which the doctrine of atonement could be taught.

We have quoted exclusively from the New Testament, and the texts glanced at are scarcely a tithe of what might be presented. The Old Testament also is full of Christ. "To him give all the prophets witness." To him refer a thousand Jewish types. The path of the Church, from Eden to Sinai, and from Sinai to Calvary, was lined with finger-posts and mile-stones, pointing the way and marking the distance to the cross. "Abraham desired to see Christ's day, and he saw it, and was glad."

Job knew that his Redeemer lived, and should "stand at the latter day upon the earth." Moses spoke of his advent, and symbolized his atonement, to the chosen tribes in the wilderness. Balaam prophesied "from the top of the rock:"—"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." The royal Psalmist sang the achievements of his cross, and raised the prelude of his coronation anthem. And what was the whole of ceremonial Judaism but symbolic Christianity? The priest and the victim, the altar and the incense, the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood, the scape-goat sent away into the wilderness—what were they all, but types which had their archetypes in heaven—foreshadowings of "better things to come"—that greater substitution of the Innocent for the guilty—that mightier expiation wrought out for us by the agony of the God-man? What the law exhibits in expressive emblem, the gospel announces by articulate revelation. This blessed doctrine pervades the whole volume of Scripture, and constitutes the key-note of its harmony; and ineffable is the joy of Faith, in tracing its progressive development from the earliest dawn to the perfect day—from the glimmerings of redemption through the first promise in Paradise, to the bursting of immortality from the riven tomb in Salem!

Pause we here over the magnitude of the work. Never were such difficulties so marvellously mastered. Behold the sinful race weltering in guilt and woe. Ah! what hopelessness of agony! what intensity of despair! Mercy, with bleeding heart, bends weeping over the spectacle. Alas! she cannot help. Holiness, Justice, and Truth sternly prohibit all interposition in their behalf, without satisfaction rendered for their sin. They have violated the law, and its sanctity must be vindicated. They have insulted the Sovereign, and his authority must be maintained. The curse which they have incurred, can be removed only by a sacrifice equal to

their crimes. Rivers of oil and seas of blood will not avail for their ransom. Their guilt must be expiated by one possessing their nature; but the victim must be pure as an angel, and not less in dignity than God. An immaculate man, an infinite creature, a suffering Deity must be their substitute, and bear their sin and shame. Ah! what wisdom can be adequate to such an emergency? what expedient meet so mighty a paradox? Hark! the inquiry of “powers and principalities in heavenly places:”—“Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?” “There is silence in heaven.” The cherubim look earnestly upon one another, and the seraphim bow wondering at the throne. Again the inquiry; and while the angelic hosts look ineffable pity and ineffable despair, “one like unto the Son of man” presents himself, saying:—“Here am I: send me.” The offer is accepted: the pledge is given: prophets are commissioned: ceremonial types are instituted; and, in the fulness of time, Christ comes into the world to save sinners:

“And angels fly with eager joy,
To bear the news to man;”

and Mercy leads the escort of the descending Redeemer; and Holiness and Justice and Truth meet her at the manger, and kiss her at the cross; while the many-voiced song of the ransomed, from the far-off future ages, falls on the ear of faith:—“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father—unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever—amen!”

VIII.—THE SYMBOLIC EVANGEL.

THE Bible is a book to be studied. Its meaning is not always obvious to the superficial reader. Many of its most instructive passages require much mental labor to detect their true significance and utility. On a mere casual perusal, they may appear of comparatively small importance; but when we come to give them a thorough examination, hidden truths begin to develop themselves, and we find a bed of diamonds where we expected nothing but the sand which we saw upon the surface. He, therefore, who is either too indolent or too imbecile to think—to study—to investigate—to compare text with text—the fact with the prediction—the present substance with the former shadow—must, in many instances, remain ignorant of the real force and beauty of Revealed Truth.

These observations are applicable to that remarkable phenomenon recorded by the Evangelist as one of the accompaniments of the crucifixion—the rending of the vail of the temple in twain from the top to the bottom. Many consider this singular occurrence as one of those prodigies which attended the death of our blessed Lord, in order merely to mark the importance of that event, and attract to it the attention of mankind. With this view they are satisfied. They institute no further inquiry—apprehend no greater utility of the wonder, no less obvious import of the record. But those who

endeavor to penetrate its typical meaning, and understand its emblematic design, will find in it a volume of truth—a treasure of grace—the gospel symbolized. Let us attempt its illustration. In doing this, it will be necessary, first, to *describe the vail* that was rent; after which we shall be better able to understand *its typical character*, and *the true significance of its rending* at the very moment of the Messiah's death.

I. The interior of the temple consisted of two compartments—the Holy Place, and the Most Holy. The former contained the emblems of the Divine service—the altar, the candlestick, and the table of show-bread; the latter, the symbols of the Divine Presence—the ark of the covenant, surmounted by the mercy-seat, occupied by the Shekinah, and overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim. In the Holy Place the priests performed the more ordinary sacraments of worship—the daily offerings and prayers; in the Most Holy dwelt the Visible Glory of Jehovah, to which the high priest alone might approach, and he but once a year, and then with trembling and with sacrificial blood. Between these two apartments, and separating the one from the other, hung the vail which was rent at the crucifixion.

The vail of the tabernacle and the vail of the temple were identical in material, texture, and use. Of the former we have a clear and full account in the book of Exodus. It was made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, curiously wrought with cherubim; and hung upon four pillars of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold, for a covering to the ark of the testimony. From the Second Book of Chronicles we learn that the vail in Solomon's temple was of the same kind, and answered the same purpose. It covered the place of Jehovah's manifestation. It concealed the Glory of God. The Second Temple was, in all its essential features, and all

its more important appendages, precisely similar to the former; and the vail which was rent at the time of our Redeemer's death was of the same character, and occupied the same position, as that at first made by Moses, and that afterward by Solomon. Be it, then, distinctly borne in mind, that the vail mentioned by the Evangelist was that which concealed the Most Holy Place; and when that vail was rent, the ark of the covenant, with its superincumbent mercy-seat and its sheltering cherubim, but long since deserted of its Glorious Occupant, stood forth to open view—a most significant representation of the design of Messiah's death.

II. Let us inquire into the meaning of this remarkable emblem.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of Christ's humanity, and its rending represented his violent sacrificial death. "He hath consecrated for us," saith the apostle, "a new and living way into the Holiest through the vail—that is to say, his flesh." As the vail separated the Holy Place and the Most Holy, yet constituted the organ of communication between the two; so our sinful flesh is the barrier that prevents our approximation to the Eternal, but "the likeness of sinful flesh" assumed and sacrificed by the Son of God reopens the avenue of intercourse. "God was manifest in the flesh." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Therefore, when he uttered his expiring cry, the vail of the temple was rent. The shadow moved with the substance. The type declared itself superseded by the antitype. Mount Zion bore witness to what was passing on Mount Calvary. While the soul and the body of Jesus were violently torn asunder, the rending of the vail proclaimed the importance and the preciousness of the sacrifice.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles, and its rending repre-

sented the abolition of that distinction by the gospel. The Mosaic religion was a national institution, provided for a separate and peculiar people. It contemplated chiefly the benefit of the children of Abraham. "It was a small craft," says Christmas Evans, "trading only with the land of Canaan." But the New Covenant, which Christ died to establish, offers salvation to sinners, not on the ground of any carnal relationship, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's merit. Christianity is a personal concern between every man and his God. Therefore it is adapted to Gentiles as well as Jews. "The promise is to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Christ died for all, and sent his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. The sweet incense offered on Calvary fills the world with its fragrance. The fountain opened in Jerusalem sends forth its living waters into every land. The earthquake which rent the vail of the temple hath demolished for ever "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of the obscurity which shrouded the doctrine of redemption, and its rending represented the illustration of that doctrine by the cross. Up to the period of the crucifixion, the Divine economy in the salvation of sinners was but imperfectly understood. Uninspired men could not comprehend the medium and the method of reconciliation with their Maker. True, God was propitiated, and dwelt with his people. True, the sincere believer was justified, and the devout worshipper was accepted, and the departing saint was received into everlasting habitations. Yet clouds and darkness were round about the throne. The supplicating sinner was saved—he knew not how—through a redemption, of which he could no more comprehend the agency than he could calculate the preciousness. But the crucifixion developed the mystery, and the rending veil intimated its development. The sacrificial cross is the fountain-

light, whence gracious beams shoot backward to the fall, and forward to the final restitution; illustrating the relation of man to his Maker, and clearing up the obscurity which invested the economy of salvation. As far as the way of God is comprehensible, it is now manifest. Where it involves infinity, of course, we still remain in darkness, and must remain in darkness for ever. But the purposes of the Divine Mercy, the chosen method of their accomplishment, and the sure and ample basis of a sinner's hope—these are fully unfolded and explained in the gospel, through the grand propitiatory offering of Christ Jesus.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of the mysteriousness which characterized the Mosaic ritual, and its rending represented the abrogation of that ritual for a more simple and spiritual worship. The Jewish ceremonial was only the "shadow of good things to come." Every part of the tabernacle and the temple service prefigured some parallel reality in the true evangelical worship. According to the law of Moses, "without shedding of blood was no remission." Through the appointed medium of animal sacrifices the Almighty was propitiated; but this was only a ceremonial propitiation, available and efficacious merely through the anticipated merit of that real atonement which was to be offered once for all. The merit of those shadowy services was itself a shadow. They looked out to the coming of the great Deliverer, who should "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." The blood of bulls and goats could not open an effectual way into the Divine presence. The vail still remained before the mercy-seat, "the Holy Ghost thereby signifying that the holiest of all was not yet made manifest:" that the mystery of the Mosaic ceremonial was yet undeveloped; that a better oblation was needed for the satisfaction of Heaven's insulted justice; that something remained to be accomplished, to which all these services pointed, and of which they consti-

tuted the prevenient adumbration. But lo! "the fulness of the time!" The promised Substitute appears: the true Passover—the Lamb of God—is slain; and henceforth the meaning of the typical worship ceaseth for ever. The whole mystery of the ceremonial shadows centred in the sacrificial cross, and in the sacrificial cross was finished. While the Prince of life poured out his soul unto death, the vail of the temple gave forth striking testimony to the sufficiency of the offering. The typical emblem of his body was rent. Then merged the anticipation in the reality. Then faded the moon and the stars before the risen Sun of righteousness. Then ended all the virtue and utility of those arbitrary institutions, which for so many ages had pointed significantly to the Hope of Israel. Judaism is henceforth an abrogated system; and the continuation, on the part of man, of its once magnificent, but now unmeaning ceremonial, is criminal infatuation and rebellion.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of our separation from God by sin, and its rending represented the freedom of access restored to believers through the mediation of Christ. Man, in his pristine purity, walked with God, and needed no mediator. The intercourse was direct and perfect. But sin entered, and God retired. The sinner is without God in the world. Unavailing are all his unaided efforts to find God. Here the researches of reason and philosophy are futile. Here the highest human genius feels its imbecility. Here pagan wisdom gropes in darkness, bewildered with endless speculations; till, weary of its fruitless wanderings after the Great Unknown, it bows down to the worship of a block or a brute, or adores even the spirit of evil. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself." Access to the Supreme is purely a matter of Divine permission and appointment. There is no approach, but through the medium and in the manner of his own gracious prescription. Under the Mosaic institution, he received a typical service, and admitted the believer to forgive-

ness and favor; but Deity sat concealed within the vail, and that vail symbolized with the barrier which sin had raised between man and his Maker—a barrier scarcely passed by adumbrative ordinances, and never removed till the atonement which those ordinances prefigured had lifted the curse from humanity. That atonement Christ made upon the cross. He “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Now the mystery is revealed. The legal restriction of the first covenant is removed by the merciful provision of the second. The mighty problem is solved, which transcended the intellect of former ages, and challenged the penetration of seer and sage. Adding the infinite worth of Divinity to the sufferings of an immaculate humanity, Jesus laid down his life under the curse of a law which he had not violated, and became “the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” And now the interposing vail is rent, the sinner may “come boldly to the throne of grace.” Nothing is needful, but a penitential reliance upon that “meritorious cross and passion.” The worship of the believer becomes a direct communication of the soul with God. He no longer gazes upon the mystic curtain which conceals the place of Jehovah’s manifestation, and exclaims—“O that I might come even to his seat!” Sprinkling himself with the blood of the cross, he draws nigh with full assurance of faith. He beholds not a consuming fire which no sinner may approach, but a compassionate and forgiving God. No cloud obscures his vision; no barrier intercepts his path. The Eternal Spirit becomes actually present to his soul. It is no poetic figure, but a gracious reality. He walks with God, dwells in God, and God in him. His worship is an intimate communion with the Almighty—the breathing of a human heart into the very bosom of Divinity.

The vail of the temple was emblematical of our retributive exclusion from the joys of Paradise, and its rending repre-

sented our restoration through the gospel to the hope of a blessed immortality. As the high-priest slew the victim without, and afterwards presented the blood within, so Christ—at once high-priest and victim—made his soul a sacrifice for sin on earth, and then ascended to plead the merit of that sacrifice on behalf of sinners before the celestial mercy-seat. He “hath not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” He stands before the throne as a lamb newly slain, ever living to make intercession for his people. When he took his departure from Olivet, and while the disciples stood gazing after him, “a cloud received him out of their sight.” The essential laws of their terrestrial dwelling-place prevented their feeble vision from following him farther. The cloudy vail closed behind him, and he was concealed in heaven. Reason cannot penetrate that vail. Philosophy cannot follow that flight. But where reason and philosophy fail, faith comes to our aid. Faith, with eagle eye and angel wing, pursues the ascending Saviour, nor pauses beneath the empyrean. Whither he hath gone we know, and the way we know; and though we cannot follow him now, we shall follow him hereafter. The vail behind which he hath passed is “rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” Heaven is open above us, and earth itself is converted into a vestibule of heaven. Death is abolished. Life and immortality are brought to light. Christ’s resurrection hath unsealed the sepulchre of every saint. He rose as our Head, and ascended as our Leader. No longer bow we at the veiled entrance of the Holiest, and sigh for the vision of its glories. We have clear and palpable evidence of the life eternal. We know that our Redeemer liveth; and because he liveth, we shall live also. We know that he “hath entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” We know that he “was once offered to bear the sins of many;

and to them that look for him, he shall appear the second time, without a sin-offering, unto salvation." We know that "in his Father's house are many mansions;" and he hath gone "to prepare a place" for us; and will certainly "come again, and receive" us unto himself; and where he is, there we shall be also. These are the assurances of faith. Henceforth heaven and earth are one, and their connection is the cross of Christ.

"The Holy to the Holiest leads—
From thence our spirits rise;
And he that in thy statutes treads
Shall meet thee in the skies."

Such is the language of this great Symbolic Evangel—so many and so magnificent the lessons taught us by a single incident recorded in sacred story. How valuable must be that mine, of which one little vein reveals such incalculable wealth! No wonder David loved the ancient Scriptures, and the Son of David enjoined their diligent perusal! No wonder the saints of all ages have esteemed the sacred books as their dearest treasure, and martyrs have clung to them in the last agony of life, and many a man of God has pillowed his head upon them in death! How should we prize the Gospel—the record of our redemption—the revelation of our immortality! How should we glory in that which was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness!"

"To man the bleeding Cross hath promised all:
The bleeding Cross hath sworn eternal grace:
Who gave his life, what gift will he deny?"

The things of which we have spoken are no poetic fictions. They are the solemn verities of God—the revelations of Heaven to earth. We are all interested in them—unspeakably interested as rational and redeemed immortals. But what

avails this "glorious gospel of the blessed God," with all its gracious proposals and gratuitous proffers, without an appropriating faith and a practical improvement? O that we may learn to appreciate our privileges, and trust in the sacred blood which hath "consecrated for us a new and living way" to the mercy-seat, and aspire to the perfect and everlasting worship of the Father "within the veil!"

IX.—THE EMPTY SEPULCHRE.

No event in the history of our redemption is more important than the resurrection of the Redeemer. His incarnation was important; for if he had not been incarnate, he could not have been our kinsman; and if he had not been our kinsman, he could not have been our substitute; and if he had not been our substitute, his sufferings could not have availed for our ransom. His crucifixion was important; for if he had not been crucified, the Scriptures could not have been fulfilled, the violated law could not have been honored, the Divine government could not have been vindicated, the holiness and justice of God could not have been demonstrated, and the guilt of the human race could not have been expiated. But equally important was his resurrection; for without this his incarnation and crucifixion could have been no benefit to the world: we should have wanted proof of his Divinity, of his power to redeem us, of the acceptance of his sacrifice for us on the part of the Father: we should have had no high-priest within the veil, and no assurance of awaking from the long sleep of the sepulchre. If Christ is not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain, and we are found false witnesses before God, and they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."*

* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

vor to prove the fact, and show its vital relation to the hopes of the Church.

I. THE FACT.

That Christ died is beyond a question; and the Jews, the most inveterate enemies of his religion, never denied it. The soldiers, when they came to break his legs, were so well satisfied of it, that they declined executing their purpose; but to make it perfectly sure, one of them thrust a spear into his side, and blood and water issued from the wound. The water mingling with the blood, proves the spear to have penetrated the pericardium—the membrane which surrounds the heart; and if the victim had not been dead before, this must have caused immediate death. The soldiers and spectators affirmed these facts, and John declares that he beheld them with his own eyes.

It is equally clear that our Lord was buried. Joseph of Arimathea, by permission of Pilate, took the body from the cross, and laid it in his own new tomb, which was hewn out of a rock. To make it secure, a great stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, and it was sealed with the Roman signet, which it was death to break; and sixty soldiers were stationed there to keep watch, lest his disciples should steal away the body, and affirm their Master's resurrection from the dead. But notwithstanding all these precautionary measures, on the morning of the third day the body was missing from the sepulchre. How is this fact to be accounted for? If Christ did not arise from the dead, his body must have been taken away either by his friends or his foes. That it was removed by his friends is very improbable: they had no use for it, and having it in their possession would have ruined their cause. But if it was removed by his enemies, why did they not avow the fact when the apostles proclaimed his resurrection? Why did they not produce the corpse, and expose the

imposition? Why did they not contradict Peter on the day of Pentecost, when he charged them with killing "the Prince of life," and boldly affirmed his resurrection from the dead? There is no alternative: he "rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." There are four distinct sources of evidence—the *testimony of the soldiers, of the angels, of the disciples, and of the Holy Ghost*—by which the fact may be fully established.

The testimony of the soldiers. These were the first to proclaim the fact. They fled in consternation, and reported to the authorities of Jerusalem the earthquake at the sepulchre, the angelic apparition, and the resurrection of their charge. Their manifest terror and dismay, and the perfect identity of their testimony, forced the conviction of their hearers. They felt themselves under the necessity of inventing a barefaced falsehood, and procuring its publication by the soldiers, to discredit their own original testimony, lest the fact which they could not question themselves should gain currency among the people. So the chief priests and elders bribed them to say, "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." A most improbable story! Is it likely that a few unarmed men—men so timid that they fled when their Master was apprehended—would venture through a band of Roman soldiers, at the imminent peril of their lives, to steal a corpse? If, from fear, they forsook the living Jesus, would they have the temerity to encounter the legionary guard, and break the proconsular seal of Rome, in order to possess themselves of his body?

But it is said the soldiers were asleep. This is very improbable; for it was death to a Roman soldier to be found asleep upon his post; and if some of them chanced to fall asleep, it is incredible that they should all do so at the same time. But they were asleep, or they were not. If they were, why were they not punished for their delinquency? and if

they were not, why did they suffer the body to be removed? If they were, how did they know what happened during the time? and if they were not, what credence is to be given to their testimony when they say they were? If they were, they affirm that of which they have no evidence; and if they were not, they assert what they knew to be false; so that, in either case, they are utterly unworthy of credit.

In short, if the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb, why was not a reward offered for its recovery? Why was no effort made to ascertain the fact? Why were not the disciples apprehended? Why were they suffered to preach the resurrection? Why were they never refuted or contradicted? The story was clearly a sheer fabrication—a desperate measure of the Jews to conceal the too evident fact of their victim's resurrection. In spite of the bribery and perjury of the soldiers, their original testimony remains in all its force. In that, they could have had no motive to deceive; and such was the penalty of delinquency in a Roman soldier, and such the rigorous execution of military law, that nothing but the fact could have forced them to publish that Jesus was risen.

The testimony of the angels. This is recorded by all the four evangelists.* At first view there seems some discrepancy between their several accounts. Matthew and Mark speak of one angel: Luke and John of two. Matthew and Luke say the appearance was within the sepulchre: Mark and John, that it was without. How are these different statements to be harmonized?

The difficulty is only apparent. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, with Joanna, Salome, and other women, came early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus. When they found not the body, Mary ran to tell Peter and John. While she was gone, the other women,

* Matt. xxviii. Mark xvi. Luke xxiv. John xx.

remaining at the sepulchre, saw the angel who addressed them as related by Matthew and Mark: "He is not here: he is risen, as he said."

But Matthew represents the angel as sitting upon the stone without the sepulchre, and Mark declares that he sat upon the right side within. True; but Matthew does not say he sat upon the stone when he spoke to the women; and Mark mentions his rolling away the stone, and sitting upon it, as having occurred before their arrival. The fact seems to be, that having rolled away the stone, and sat upon it for a time, he then entered the sepulchre, where he sat when the women came.

To proceed: As soon as Peter and John received Mary's report, they arose and ran to the sepulchre, and found the facts as represented to them. After their departure, Mary comes again to the sepulchre, and sees the two angels, as related by Luke and John. The other women had already departed, and did not witness the glorious apparition. So there were three visits early that morning to the tomb of Jesus—the first by several women, the second by Peter and John, and the third by Mary alone. Peter and John saw Jesus, but saw no angels. Mary saw two angels, and the other women saw but one. Thus the several accounts are harmonized. The angelic manifestations were made to different persons at different times.

This apparent discrepancy, so far from invalidating the testimony of the evangelists, only confirms the truth of the record. If all the four had related the same facts in the same manner, infidels would have set up the cry of collusion and forgery. But the slight variations in the narrative—one narrator stating one fact and another another—precludes the possibility of such a charge with the least show of justice, while the main facts—every thing that is essential in the history—are explicitly stated by all. From the whole, it is

evident that several angels bore distinct testimony to our Lord's resurrection.

The testimony of the disciples. Scores and hundreds declared the fact, and many of them died for the declaration. They could not have been deceived themselves, nor is there any reason to suppose that they desired to deceive the world. They had every opportunity and advantage for ascertaining the truth in the case. Most of them were familiar with Jesus before his crucifixion; and many of them beheld him upon the tree, and followed him to the tomb. They declare that after his burial they saw him alive, at different times, in different places, by day as well as by night, for the space of forty days—that they walked and talked with him, ate and drank with him, beheld his wounds, touched his person, and witnessed his ascension to heaven. He appeared four times on the very day of his resurrection: first to Mary at the sepulchre, then to Peter and John as they returned from the sepulchre, next to Cleopas and his companion on their way to Emmaus, and finally to all the apostles, except Thomas, as they sat at meat. Eight days after this, he showed himself to the whole company again, Thomas being present; and subsequently at the Sea of Tiberias, and on a mountain in Galilee. Paul says that he was seen also of James, and of above five hundred brethren at once. All this was before his ascension. Afterward he was seen of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus, and John in the Isle of Patmos.

Such were the facilities of the disciples for ascertaining the truth. They were not credulous men. They were "slow of heart to believe." When the women told them of the resurrection, "their words seemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not." When Christ afterward appeared to them, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." When one of them reported to Thomas his appearance to the rest, he declared that he would

not believe till he should put his fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wounded side—would not believe till he should touch the fact—till he should feel the resurrection. Certainly these were not men to be imposed upon; and they would have continued to reject the report, had it not been confirmed by ocular and tangible demonstration. They were not deceived themselves.

Is it likely that they sought to deceive others? There was no temptation. The fraud could gain them nothing but torture, infamy, and martyrdom. What then could induce them to declare the resurrection, if it were not true? Why did they go about and preach it, at the hazard of all that was dear to them on earth? Why did they maintain it in exile, in prison, at the stake, and on the cross? What but a thorough conviction of the glorious fact which they affirmed could have converted these timid and heart-broken men, in a few days, into moral heroes and confessors, fearless alike of confiscation, imprisonment, torture, and death?

If they desired to palm a falsehood upon mankind, why did they not wait a little, or repair to some other country with the story? Why did they commence preaching the resurrection in the very city of the crucifixion, while Calvary was yet crimson with the victim's blood? If it was false, they knew that the Jews had abundant means of refuting the falsehood, and that their malice would scruple at no plausible measures for its exposure. Yet they boldly affirmed that the Crucified was alive again—that they had seen him, conversed with him, and handled his person. Why were not their declarations denied and disproved? Why did no writer in the apostolic age call the matter in question? Why do Jewish Rabbins and Pagan Annalists maintain a studied silence on the subject? It is preached everywhere. It is proclaimed in Athens and Corinth. It is reported to the Roman senate. It is asserted before a thousand tribunals. It is notorious throughout the

civilized world. It becomes a recorded fact in history. Why is no voice lifted to rebuke the lie? The evidence was too overwhelming that it was no lie; and the enemies of the gospel knew that any attempt at its refutation would only confirm the fact.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit. We find this in the success of Christianity, and the miracles which attended its primitive promulgation. If the asserted resurrection was unreal, how are we to account for the effects of its publication? Its publishers were a few illiterate fishermen, without money, influence, or reputation. Their story was offensive alike to Jews and Gentiles. Their cause was extremely unpopular. They were "everywhere spoken against." They were everywhere hated and persecuted. Priests and magistrates did their utmost to silence them. Dungeons and gibbets menaced them on every side. Yet, under all these disadvantages, their testimony was soon received by myriads, many of whom lived in Jerusalem, and had witnessed the crucifixion.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter charged the Jews boldly with having slain their Messiah, and then fearlessly attested his resurrection from the dead. Was it false? Why, then, were the hearers "pricked in the heart?" Why did they quail under the accusation of an impostor? Why did three thousand of them believe a lie—a lie which any one of them could easily disprove? and why did they submit to Christian baptism in profession of that belief?

Verily, if the apostles were deceivers, they were the most adroit and successful deceivers the world ever saw. Wherever they came, multitudes received their testimony, and embraced their faith, and heathen oracles went dumb, and idols fell from their pedestals, and altars were demolished, and temples were closed; and the preaching of a risen Jesus triumphed over the philosophy of Athens and the eloquence of Rome; and the world looked on in wonder, to see the impotency of

human power, and the worthlessness of human policy, to cope with the Nazarenes. How will you explain their success, if their preaching was a mere fancy or a base fabrication? The effect was evidently supernatural. Did the God of truth sanction a lie?

True, Mohammed, though a great impostor, won many converts, and spread his religion with wonderful rapidity. But it was effected by fire and sword. The apostles, on the contrary, had no power but that of truth, no weapons but those of the Spirit. They were a feeble and suffering band, feared by none, despised by all. Yet they soon turned the world upside down, and planted the cross on the throne of the Cæsars. It was Heaven that aided their efforts; and seconded their preaching by the effusion of his grace; and attested the great fact which they published by "signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," which neither the pride nor the prejudice of their hearers was able to resist.

Yet deists tell us it was enthusiasm, fanaticism, and delusion. If so, it is an instance without a counterpart or a parallel in the history of the world. When and where do you find so many persons, all at once, deceived by their own fancies, in a plain matter of fact, and agreeing by thousands in the same single testimony? And if it were possible that they should be so deceived themselves, is it likely that they would be able to spread the delusion, with such astonishing facility, among myriads of men, when every thing was against them? The supposition is utterly absurd, and shows the desperate folly of those who deny the resurrection of our Lord. God himself has testified; and every miracle wrought by the apostles, and every conversion to Christianity from the Pentecost to the present day, is a fresh attestation by the Holy Ghost to the statement of St. Paul:—"Now is Christ risen from the dead." So much for the fact: it remains that we notice—

II. ITS RELATION TO OUR HOPES.

He is "become the first fruits of them that slept." The expression is metaphorical—an allusion to the offering of first fruits under the Levitical law. The offering of first fruits insured and sanctified the harvest. So the resurrection of the Saviour demonstrates and exemplifies the resurrection of the saints.

But were not several others raised before Christ? How, then, can he be called "the first fruits of them that slept?" We answer:—

First:—They were raised by the power of Christ. Christ was raised by his own power. He had "power to lay down his life, and power to take it again."

Secondly:—They were raised to die again. Christ, being raised, "dieth no more—death hath no more dominion over him." "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Thirdly:—They were raised by virtue of Christ's approaching resurrection. He procured their resurrection, as well as ours; and it was in anticipation of his glorious conquest on the morning of the third day after his crucifixion, that the widow's son upon his bier, the ruler's daughter upon her bed, and the brother of Martha and Mary from the grave, awoke to second life.

Fourthly:—They were raised in attestation of our Lord's Divinity. It was to prove his power over death, that men might trust in him as "the resurrection and the life." All the resurrections which he effected before his own were miraculous demonstrations of his Godhead. But the most stupendous miracle—the miracle of miracles—was the resurrection of himself. This proclaimed him "the Son of God with power," and laid a broad and firm foundation for the confidence and the hope of his followers. His resurrection

assures us of our own. He is "become the first fruits of them that slept." But how? in what sense?

First:—His resurrection proves that he has procured ours. Had he remained in the tomb, we should have had reason to doubt the sufficiency of his sacrifice—the completeness of his satisfaction. He died to redeem our bodies, as well as our souls; and his resurrection shows that he has done so—shows that he is accepted as our substitute—that his vicarious offering of himself has purchased the deliverance of his people.

Secondly:—His resurrection demonstrates his power to raise the dead. If he raised his own body, he is able to raise the bodies of his saints. He has conquered the king of terrors, and swallowed up death in victory. The resurrection is compared to a harvest. The growth of the grain is natural, and the revival of the dead is supernatural; but Omnipotence is equally necessary in both cases; and he who can make the seed germinate in the soil, can quicken the bodies of the just into immortal life from the tomb; and but for our familiarity with the phenomenon, the gradual development and maturity of vegetation were quite as wonderful an exhibition of Almightiness, as the sudden bursting of the cemetery into imperishable bloom and fruitage at our Saviour's second coming. He who saith concerning his people—"I will redeem them from death, I will ransom them from the power of the grave," has demonstrated his power to fulfil the promise; for, by the inherent energy of his own Godhead, he revived when he was dead, and came forth immortal from the tomb.

Thirdly:—His resurrection is the pledge and the pattern of the resurrection of his people. He rose in our nature, as our representative. He is the Head of the body, and all believers in him are members; and the rising Head must surely draw the members after him. Therefore we are justly said to be "risen with Christ," and "begotten again unto a living

hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection, from the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order—Christ the first fruits, and afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." And as our representative, he is the model of our resurrection. He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "If we be planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." In what respects?

First:—Christ's body was substantially the same after its resurrection as before. He had the same "flesh and bones," and he exhibited to his disciples the wounds in "his hands and his feet." It was the same body, though glorious and immortal. So with the saints. Every one shall have the same body, not another. If another, it would be a creation, not a resurrection. The body that dies shall live again. The body that is buried shall be raised.

Secondly:—Christ's body, though the same, was marvelously improved in its resurrection and ascension. It was refined, made spiritual, superior to physical laws, and no longer liable to infirmities, sickness, and death. Such shall be the resurrection body of the believer. "It is sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body." No more infirmities, necessities, deformities, defects, or deaths. The law of mortality shall be repealed, and "the children of the resurrection" shall be "equal to the angels."

Thirdly:—Christ was "the first begotten from the dead"—"the first fruits of them that slept." So his saints shall be raised first in the day of his second advent. Nothing in connection with the last transactions of our world is more clearly revealed. Our Lord speaks of "the resurrection of

the just" in contradistinction to the resurrection of the unjust. The apostles do the same. We are told that the saints are to judge the world, which they cannot do unless they are raised first. It is a remarkable fact, that in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where Paul treats so largely of the resurrection, it is only of the resurrection of the righteous. True, he says "all shall be made alive;" but then he states the order: "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming; then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;" and when, according to other scriptures, the wicked are to be raised for judgment.

Finally:—Christ rose that he might be "crowned with glory and honor;" and his people shall be raised that they may be glorified together with him. Joseph came forth from prison to be the prime minister of Egypt, and next in honor to the king; but the saints shall ascend from their graves to be "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ," in the enjoyment of an eternal kingdom. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "To him that overcometh"—such is his promise—"will I grant to sit with me in my throne." O, what an enthronement—what a coronation—of those whom the ungodly world have persecuted, and despised, and trampled! What a triumph over all our enemies! What a reward for all the efforts of a holy life! What an indemnification for a few years of sickness and sorrow! What an amazing consummation of Christ's redeeming love!

"How can it be, thou Heavenly King!
That thou shouldst us to glory bring?
Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
Decked with a never-fading crown!"

Such is the vital relation which our Lord's resurrection

sustains to the most precious hopes of his people. And now the way "through the valley of the shadow of death" is illuminated by the glorious footsteps of the Son of God; and beyond the darkness, amid the splendors of immortality—himself the radiating fountain—we see him holding forth crowns of life to his followers. Let us follow "the Captain of our salvation," unshrinking, to the final conflict! He has conquered the last enemy in his own dominions; and faith in him shall make us "more than conquerors."

But if you would share in the power and blessedness of his resurrection, you must acquire an interest in the merit of his death. Without this, what is your hope? You shall awake from the sleep of the sepulchre; but it shall be "to shame and everlasting contempt." If you would rise to a blessed immortality, you must first rise to a life of holiness. O, seek an interest for yourselves in the living Redeemer! Believe in him, obey him, and love him! Then shall you spring with joy from your graves to hail his final advent! Then shall you shine among his saints "as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever!"

X.—THE RETURN TO HEAVEN.

IT is a question of some importance, Why did our Lord remain on earth forty days after his resurrection? Why did he not ascend immediately to his Father? The answer is not difficult. He remained awhile for the instruction and consolation of his disciples; for the confirmation of their faith, and the encouragement of their hope. He would not return to heaven till he had given them all necessary information concerning his kingdom, all necessary assurance respecting their salvation; till he had furnished them with such a demonstration of his Divinity as would effectually preclude all future doubt, and lay a broad and firm foundation for their confidence; such an exhibition of his tender regard as would serve to support them in his absence, and render them patient in tribulation, and joyful in hope of his second advent.

One great object of his mission was to abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light. How was this to be achieved? He must demonstrate his power over the last enemy. He must prove himself able to destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. But by what means is this to be effected? By his own revival from the dead. No other proof will answer: no other pledge can be given of the resurrection of his people. But how are his people to be assured of his revival? They must see him after his resurrection. They must see their slain and buried Master again exercising the functions of a living man. But would the proof

of his resurrection have been complete, if he had ascended to heaven immediately on his egress from the grave? Probably the disciples themselves would have doubted the fact, and the Jews would have believed indeed that his body had been stolen away. He must remain awhile on earth. A brief visit or two to his friends is not enough. They must see him again and again. They must eat, drink, and converse with him. They must have sensible evidence of the identity of his person and the reality of his resurrection. Therefore he manifests himself to them frequently, in different places, with various circumstances, solitary and assembled; and by repeated interviews—of which no less than ten are recorded—they are convinced that he is indeed the Resurrection and the Life, the conqueror of death and hell; so thoroughly convinced, and so powerfully impressed with the truth, that they are qualified for preaching it to the world, with an assurance that carries conviction to their hearers, and a confidence which the menace of torture and of martyrdom cannot dismay.

The apostles needed instruction. They were ignorant of many things concerning that kingdom which their Master came from heaven to establish. They could not understand its spiritual and heavenly character. They could not understand a sovereignty whose throne was a cross, whose sceptre a reed, whose diadem a wreath of thorns. The Jewish vail was still upon their hearts. The real nature of atonement, the ground of a sinner's justification, the agency of the Holy Spirit in the renovation of the human soul, were matters too mysterious for their feeble grasp of faith. But during these forty days, their Master visited them often, and discoursed with them familiarly on these and kindred topics. In these discourses, what floods of light were poured over the prophetic Scriptures! What sublime revelations were given! what illustrations of the shadowy past! what glorious visions of the future! What wonderful discoveries of truth were made!

what errors and misapprehensions removed! what mountains of prejudice swept away! what new strength of assurance imparted! what new ardors of love enkindled! what new energy and zeal infused! How rich was every hour in hopes revived, thoughts spiritualized, holy desires awakened, and lofty resolutions formed! And thus what a change was wrought in these timid, doubting, and despondent souls! They had wept over their ruined expectations. They had seen their Lord crucified, and buried their dearest hopes in his tomb. But now their grief and despair have given way to the glad certainty that he is alive again, and alive for evermore. He has triumphed over death. The conqueror could not bind his Captive. "Free among the dead," he arose and came forth from the sepulchre, and with him the hopes of his people. It is the fulfilment of prophecy. It is the demonstration of his Divinity. It is the pledge of their own immortality. It is the beginning of the everlasting kingdom. They perceive it now, and they are satisfied. Their Master is with them once more—with them in "the power of an endless life." They see his face; they hear his voice; they listen to his teaching; they rejoice in his gracious benediction. But the privilege is only for a season. Scarcely are they convinced of the reality of all they have witnessed during the forty days that have passed so rapidly, like a blessed dream, ere they are summoned to witness his departure.

They had not witnessed his resurrection. It was not necessary: their subsequent intercourse with him would afford them sufficient evidence of the fact. With regard to the ascension, the case was different. He was about to return to heaven; and except in a few favored instances—as that of Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom, of Paul in the rapture of Paradise, and that of John in the vision of Patmos—they would see him no more till his second coming. As they could not see him after his ascension, they must see him in the act

of ascending. They must have ocular demonstration of the fact, to satisfy their own minds, and qualify them for bearing testimony to it before the world.

But why was this privilege permitted only to the disciples? Why was not this greatest evidence of his Messiahship and Godhead granted to the whole Jewish people? They had rendered themselves unworthy. They had rejected the evidence of former miracles: they would have rejected the evidence of this. They were not convinced by his resurrection: they would not have been convinced by his ascension. The pride and perverseness which had withstood the testimony of frowning skies, and rending rocks, and rising saints, and descending angels, if permitted to witness this stupendous wonder, would either have questioned its reality, or have resisted its influence. Or, if proof enough had not already been furnished, other evidence, of a very different character, and perhaps better adapted to produce conviction, was hereafter to be added, in the apostolic gifts and miracles, the spiritual manifestations of the Pentecost, and the general effusion of the Holy Ghost.

The public ministry of Jesus ended at his crucifixion. His forty days' continuance on earth was chiefly for the sake of his disciples. They were to be heralds of his grace among the nations, exposed to peril in a thousand forms, and subject to tribulation from a thousand causes. They needed the fullest proof of his Godhead; and all the instruction, consolation, and encouragement, which his frequent visits and affectionate converse could afford them. Therefore he never showed himself openly to the world; and the occasion selected for a manifestation to the members of his "little flock," was either when they were alone at the sepulchre, or when they walked solitary and sad by the way, or when they were assembled in secret for fear of the Jews. And now he is about to return to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He knows the place where they are accustomed to hold their

nightly festivals of prayer and praise. He appears unexpectedly in their midst, greets them with that well-known salutation ; and after "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," leads them out of the city, up the Mount of Olives, as near to heaven as they can go, that they may witness his last act, and receive his last benediction, and gaze after him as he goes back to his heavenly throne. The event is thus recorded in the evangelical narration :—"And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."* Let us attend to the several circumstances in this sublime description :—

I. THE POINT OF DEPARTURE.

"He led them out as far as to Bethany." There was a town of Bethany, and a district of Bethany. The town of Bethany was beyond the Mount of Olives, two miles from Jerusalem. The border of the district of Bethany, which included the town, was half-way between it and Jerusalem, on the top of the Mount of Olives. This is precisely the distance—"a Sabbath day's journey"—which the disciples are said to have returned to the city from the scene of the ascension; and this is, by common consent, the place whence our Lord took his departure. But it is not improbable that he passed over to the town, and visited the little family of orphans, and then returned to the top of the mountain, before he ascended. Can the risen Jesus forget, at such a time as this, the three that he has honored with his friendship, and from whom he has received such marked attention? There

* Luke xxiv. 50-53.

is the Martha who has ministered so lovingly to his needs, the Mary who has sat so meekly at his feet, the Lazarus whom he has reclaimed from corruption and the worms. Their names are engraven on his heart. He must see them again before he leaves the world. He must give them a last proof of his unfailing love. How often has he resorted to their cottage for refreshment and repose after the toils and fatigues of the day! How often has he sought in that sweet seclusion an asylum from the turmoil of the city, and found in the converse of those congenial souls a solace to his troubled heart! And now he has but one more hour on earth, and how shall it be better improved than by a visit to Bethany? And now he has but one more blessing to pronounce, and who more worthy to share it than the three pious orphans? And now he is to be seen no more till his second advent, and how can he go away without calling these beloved ones to witness his departure?

Christ is "a brother born for adversity"—"a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Uniting the sympathy of a man with the compassion of a God, he is deeply "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." When did he ever neglect the children of affliction? when withhold words of consolation from the bereft and broken-hearted? But of all the sufferers in this unhappy world, none need the solacements of friendship more than the orphan. And was ever orphan favored like Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus? Happy family, to have entertained such a guest, to have found a place in such a heart! "Behold how he loved them!" The mediatorial throne awaits its occupant, the Everlasting Father looks out for his long-absent Son, and myriads of exultant angels are ready to shout the Victor home; but he cannot go till he has seen the dwellers at Bethany, and given them his parting benediction. Christian, such is his regard for thee! Human language is too poor to express, human thought too feeble to

conceive, the overflowings of his friendship. Heaven hath no string sweet enough to tell its tenderness, nor loud enough to tell its strength.

“How low, how vain, our mortal airs,
When Gabriel’s nobler harp despairs !”

“He led them out as far as to Bethany.” Bethany signifies “House of Sorrow,” and perhaps it was with reference to his unrivalled sufferings that our Saviour selected this as the place whence to take his departure. He was emphatically “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” From the manger to the cross, his path was marked with tears. Peculiarly tempted of the devil ; incessantly pursued by the hunters of blood ; in the hour of his extremity, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken of all—never was sorrow like his sorrow. But of all his sufferings Calvary was the consummation. How often did he allude to the chilling scene in language of strange and indefinable foreboding ! See him yonder, at midnight, prostrate in prayer upon the dew-damp earth,

“While agony weighs down his soul,
And blood-drops from his temples roll !”

Behold him led forth, lacerated and languishing, to the place of execution. He bears his own cross, till he faints beneath the burden. Look ! they stretch him upon that fearful death-bed : they drive the nails through the shivering nerves : they rear him up between two thieves, a public spectacle of scorn and execration ; and there he hangs, convulsed, writhing in blood, and cries after his departing Father—“My God ! My God ! Why hast thou forsaken me !”

These were the sorrows of our Saviour, and from these he entered into his glory. Yea, the very mountain where he had often wept and prayed with his disciples—from whose slope

he had poured prophetic tears over the coming fate of Jerusalem—at whose base he spent part of the last terrible night before his crucifixion, agonized in his crimson perspiration, and received the traitor's kiss—was the place selected for his departure, when he went back to his throne. So all his servants must go to heaven from the “House of Sorrow.” In the world they shall have tribulation; and it is enough that the disciple be as his Master. But O, it is consoling to know that we are treading in the footsteps of Jesus, “filling up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ!” It is consoling to know that these afflictions are brief as painful, that the suffering saint shall reign with his glorified Saviour, that the sorrows of earth shall sweeten the joys of heaven—every pain rewarded with an additional pleasure, every sigh remunerated with a loftier song, and every tear crystallized into a gem for the coronal!

II. THE LAST BENEDICTION.

“And he lifted up his hands and blessed them.” How admirable the temper in which he left the world—a world that needed his mission so much, and requited the mercy so ill! Despised and rejected of men; calumniated, execrated, persecuted from the habitations of humanity; he indulges no fiery strain of censure and malediction, but quits the scene of his suffering with a smile, and his last words are words of affectionate benediction. But this was in perfect accordance with his entire character, and the benevolent end of his incarnation. He came to bless mankind, and never once did he forget the gracious errand. Grace was poured plentifully into his lips, and language of loving-kindness flowed ever from his tongue. How often did his blessing fall upon the head of infancy, like dew upon the flowers; and fill the bleeding heart of bereavement with “the oil of gladness!” Read the opening of his longest recorded sermon.* Did ever discourse

* Matthew v. 1-12.

contain so sweet an introduction? "He went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth and taught them;" and his first word was "Blessed!" Then followed benison upon benison—a benison for "the poor in spirit," a benison for "them that mourn," a benison for "the meek," a benison for "them that hunger and thirst after righteousness," a benison for "the merciful," a benison for "the pure in heart," a benison for "the peace-makers," a benison for "those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake"—as if the Divine Preacher had opened the store-house of Heaven's beatitudes, and poured all its treasured fulness at once upon their heads! Happy disciples, to have listened to such a sermon! It was Infinite Love unbosoming itself to sinful men. It was Infinite Blessedness pouring itself over the manifold sorrows of humanity.

"His words had such a melting flow,
And spoke the truth so sweetly well:
They dropped like heaven's serenest snow,
And all was brightness where they fell."

"He lifted up his hands and blessed them." What could have been more appropriate? From a scene of deepest humiliation, he was about to be exalted "far above all heavens." It was the heir coming into possession of his inheritance: it was the exiled prince returning to his kingdom; and on such an occasion of gladness, what less could he do than bless the loved ones he was leaving? He blessed them not as Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob, or as Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph—by praying for a blessing upon them. He blessed them "as one having authority"—as one whose prerogative it is to bless—as he in whom resides the fountain of all blessing—by commanding a blessing upon them. It was the father blessing his family, on the eve of a long separation. It was the master, just ready to take his departure into a far

country, blessing the servants whom he was leaving in charge of his household and his goods. It was the "Good Shepherd" blessing his "little flock"—the "King of Zion" blessing his happy subjects—the Saviour of men blessing his ransomed people—the "Great High Priest" blessing his "chosen generation"—God himself blessing his beloved children. The apostles were the representatives of the Christian Church; so that in blessing them he blessed the whole spiritual Israel. He made that little company the depositaries of his blessing to the world. He blessed them, that they might become a blessing to others. And his blessing was "not in word only, but also in deed and in truth." He not merely pronounced them blessed, but actually made them blessed. And the blessing which he then imparted still rests upon the children of the Covenant, and every believer participates in its benefits, and it shall abide with the faithful in all its original freshness for ever.

"He lifted up his hands and blessed them." Beautiful expression of his unchanging love! "I leave you," he seems to say, "but not in anger. Let not your hearts be troubled. Mine is a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown. True, ye could not watch with me in the hour of my agony; and when I was taken by the soldiers, ye all forsook me and fled. But I know your infirmities: I forgive your ingratitude. Peter, I have pardoned thy profane denial of me. Thomas, I have pardoned thy sinful unbelief of my resurrection. Ye shall still be the objects of my tenderest affection. I go to my Father; but I will not forget you: I will pray for you: I will send you the Comforter. Be of good cheer. Henceforth ye see me not; but I am ever with you: I will protect your persons: I will prosper your work. Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Ye cannot follow me now; but ye shall follow me hereafter. Be patient: be happy. If ye suffer with me, ye shall reign with

me. Fare-ye-well!"—How would such words have gladdened the sorrowful disciples! And did not the ascending Saviour mean all this, and more, when "he lifted up his hands and blessed them?" They well understood the act. To them it was no unmeaning ceremony. The language, the gesture, the aspect, were all significant of benediction, and spoke directly to the heart. And could they ever forget the endearing manner in which he took his leave? Could Peter ever deny him again, or Thomas doubt the fulfilment of his word? Do you wonder that John loved him so ineffably, and spoke in such raptures of his second coming? What a sanctifying influence had the recollection upon their lives! How did it cheer them on in their subsequent toils and tribulations! O, this is what kindled their souls with seraphic fervors, and hardened their flesh to adamant. Assured of their Master's blessing, they went forth to preach the gospel, superior to fear, and superior to pain; unaided and unarmed, in sight of dungeons and flames, contending successfully with the power and the policy of the world; and their divine ambition and uncompromising zeal confounded the sophist and convinced the skeptic; and profligate Gentile and bigoted Jew became the delighted captives of their heavenly eloquence.

III. THE ACT OF ASCENSION.

"And it came to pass, as he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Earth is not the scene of permanent associations. Lasting friendships there may be—a union of hearts that triumphs over death; but however intimate or advantageous the connection, Elisha must lose his Elijah, and David sighs upon his harp for Jonathan; and often it happens that those we love most leave us first, and our spiritual guides and helps are taken away when we are in greatest need of their counsels and prayers. Gladly would the disciples have detained their Lord; but they had

learned the expediency of his departure. He had finished his labor of love among men, and the time was come for him to return to the Father. His bodily presence was not to be expected always on earth, and those who had known him after the flesh must now henceforth know him thus no more. And when they saw him about to quit the world, how gladly would they have accompanied him; but Christ had work for them below, and they must remain to do it. The germ of a ministry which was to be "the light of the world," without whose Divine teachings a moral darkness more dreadful than the night of Egypt would have enveloped our unhappy race; the nucleus of a Church which was to be "the salt of the earth," without whose conservative influence a moral pestilence more fatal than the plague of Egypt's first-born would have rendered this globe the very charnel-house of the universe: he desired not their immediate removal to the heavenly mansions, and prayed only that they might be kept from the evil they were left to cure. And the sufferings of this earthly scene were needful for a season, to try their strength and their fortitude; and their light and transitory afflictions were the means of augmenting their eternal weight of glory; and having time to run with patience the race set before them, they might secure for themselves a more splendid portion with the saints in light.

"He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Here was no mistake. The same writer tells us in another place that "it came to pass while they beheld." Here he describes the circumstantial order of the event:—"He was parted from them"—literally, "he stood aside"—that no interruption might occur, and that all might witness the fact; and then he was "carried up," moving directly toward heaven, in full view of the whole party, till "a cloud received him out of their sight." Was it possible that they should be deceived? Was all this the work of imagination, or a mere optical illu-

sion? What company of men, amounting perhaps to several hundred, could be so imposed upon, by any artifice or trickery, as to believe that they saw another taken from their midst and carried off in a cloud to heaven? And as for the sincerity and veracity of the witnesses, when we hear the whole party unitedly affirming and reäffirming, and that without any possible motive to deceive, but in direct opposition to their worldly interests, and in the face of danger and of death, that they beheld Jesus thus ascend to heaven, how can we resist the conviction that they are honest in their statements, and not endeavoring to palm an imposition upon the world? And the testimony is corroborated by the declarations of Stephen, Paul, and John, who afterward saw the ascended Saviour in his glory; by the astonishing effusion of the Holy Ghost, according to his promise, at the Pentecost; by the "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds," wrought in his name by the apostles; and by the marvellous triumphs of his gospel, and the stupendous achievements of his grace, for more than eighteen subsequent centuries. Thus the ascension of our blessed Lord is sufficiently attested, and rests upon as firm a basis as any other fact of the Evangelical Record.

"He was carried up into heaven." He left the earth as Elijah, but with this important difference:—The prophet was translated by the power of God; whereas Christ, being himself God, ascended by the almightiness of his own volition. But some say he was carried up by angels. Unquestionably, there were angels in attendance, for we find two of them lingering to talk with the disciples. But what was their errand? Come they to bear their King back to his throne? O, he is not now the infant of Bethlehem. He is "the Lord, strong and mighty;" the Lord of hosts is his name. He needeth no angelic aid, no horses and chariots of fire. If the angel could ascend in the smoke of Manoah's sacrifice, cannot "the Lord from heaven" wrap the drapery of the clouds about him, and

return to his original abode without the interposition of any creature agency? Wherefore, then, descended the celestial legions? They came to honor their ascending Prince. They came to assure the disciples of their Master's return. They came to witness the mystery of the cross developed, and celebrate the work of redemption finished. They had heralded his advent to earth, and now they came to accompany him back to his throne. They had attended him in the fierce conflict with the powers of darkness, and now they came to participate in the coronation of the Victor. Lo! the triumphal procession approaches the eternal city, shouting—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors! and the King of glory shall come in!" And the celestial porters answer:—"Who is the King of glory?" And the response rolls back to the empyrean, like the sound of many waters:—"The Lord, mighty in battle! he is the King of glory!" And thus was fulfilled the royal Prophet's vision:—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand—even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high: thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them."

"He was carried up into heaven." Christ is glorified for ever. He hath resumed the throne which for our sake he abdicated. The government is laid upon his shoulders. The keys of death and hell are committed to his hands. "God hath highly exalted him, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, dominion and might, and every name that is named." Compared with the glorious majesty of his kingdom, all human grandeur—the pomp and splendor of courts and empires—are less than nothing, and vanity. "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and

men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed." His fame as Mediator, his trophies as Conqueror, are continually increasing. Accumulating voices are rendering to him their homage, and accumulating hearts are according to him their praise. His reign shall survive all earthly sovereignty, and derive new majesty from the conflagration of the world and the decisions of the judgment ; and the new heavens and earth shall ring with "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever !"

"He was carried up into heaven." How precious is this fact to his people ! Had he not ascended, he could not have been our Advocate, he could not have sent us the Comforter, and we must have been cheerless and hopeless in the house of our pilgrimage. But he has gone up on high ; and he sits "a priest upon his throne." He lives to bless us, to pray for us, to protect our interests, to superintend all our affairs, to accomplish the great restitution, the final redemption, the destruction of death and the devil, the extirpation of evil from the universe. "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth ;" and without a compeer, and without a rival, "he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

"He was carried up into heaven." Thither let our thoughts and affections follow him. Forget not, O my soul ! thy absent Friend. Think what he hath done for thee, what he is now doing, and what he hath promised to do. He hath gone to prepare a place for thee, and will come again and receive thee to himself. When he shall appear, thou shalt be like him, for thou shalt see him as he is. Cherish this hope in the hour of sorrow : cling to it in the agony of death ; and lift up thy head and rejoice, for thy redemption draweth nigh !

IV. THE HAPPY EFFECT UPON THE DISCIPLES.

"They worshipped him." This was a declaration of per-

petual loyalty to their Prince and Saviour. It was not an act of mere civil respect—of mere deference and admiration—such as men usually pay to superior authority, intellect, learning, or virtue, in their kind. Such worship is always performed in the presence of the person to whom it is offered; but the disciples worshipped their Master after he had risen out of sight. They knew that the cloud which concealed him from their view did not exclude them from his—that though ascended to heaven, he was still the King of Zion upon earth, and from his exalted seat would notice and approve their homage. They adored him as the Supreme Jehovah. They honored the Son even as they honored the Father. And this was in accordance with the Father's declared will, who hath commanded the angels to worship him, and required every knee to bow to his name, and every tongue to confess him Lord.

They "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." They returned to Jerusalem, where they were commanded to remain till they should "receive the promise of the Father," and be "endued with power from on high." They returned to Jerusalem to wait for the gift of the Spirit, that the most skeptical might witness their miraculous endowments, and be convinced of the Divinity of their Master and their mission. They returned to Jerusalem to commence their ministry on the very spot of the crucifixion, that the world might see they were "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," and that the murderers of the Prince of life might have the first offer of pardon through his blood. They returned to Jerusalem; for what was the malice of an enraged populace to them? What were dungeons, and scourges, and crosses, and stones, and flames? They had just seen their Lord ascend to heaven. They knew that he was alive, and glorified, and able to protect them, and would be with them "to the end of the world." They had no cause for fear or dejection, and they "returned

to Jerusalem with great joy." Here was a wonderful change. When their Master told them he was going away, "sorrow filled their hearts:" now he actually leaves them, and their sorrow is turned into joy. Whence the difference? Their understandings were opened, to discern the mystery of his sufferings and his glory; and the promised Comforter descended upon them in his sanctifying influence, though the communication of his miraculous gifts was delayed ten days longer. And O, with what a rush of holy recollections came back the past upon them! and with what a divine significance every remembered word and deed was now invested! and what a sudden simplicity and transparency the hitherto mysterious and incomprehensible now assumed! and what a radiance shone through the darkened heavens over the crucifixion! and what a glory gathered around the Redeemer's sepulchre! Thus the Comforter brought all things to their remembrance; and with the scene of the ascension ever vivid in their minds, and the recollection of a place to be prepared for them, and the anticipation of the Saviour's return, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory—a joy which was proof against fire and flood, and which no man could take from them—a joy which accompanied them through life, the same in peace and in persecution—which lightened every burden and sweetened every sorrow, and rendered them indifferent to indignities, tranquil amidst terrors and tortures, and triumphant in the agony of death!

They "were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It has been conjectured that the disciples held their social meetings in a chamber of the temple, belonging to a Levite, who secretly favored their cause. The language, however, may mean simply that they were found regularly in the house of God at the house of worship, and participating as far as they could in the exercises. They knew that the sacrifices there offered were superseded by the one great obla-

tion; but the prayers and the songs, for the most part, they could join with even a greater zest than other worshippers. When they thought of the Saviour's glorious exaltation, their souls overflowed with gladness: they sent up one united anthem unto God, and every heart was attuned to the harmony. But O, it was not the melody of sweet sounds, nor the concord of many voices, that gave attractiveness to the place and fascination to the service. It was the love they bore their ascended Master, and the holy delectation they took in his praise. It was the joy of ineffable gratitude and transcendent hope. Come and let us look in upon that happy company. There is the ever ardent Simon, repeating his former asseveration, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!" There is the seraphic John, looking up with the same calm and holy countenance as when he leaned on Jesus's bosom, and exclaiming, "We shall be like him—we shall see him as he is!" There is he who was raised from the dead, kneeling between his two sisters, expressing by silent tears the love that language cannot utter. And who is that female, with her garment folded upon her face, weeping out her wordless gratitude? That is the sinful Mary—the sinful Mary pardoned—who used to pour her floods at the Master's feet. She loveth much: she hath had much forgiven. O, how sweet

"The meltings of a broken heart!"

Weep on, happy penitent! those crystal drops are fairer in the sight of God than all the jewelry of heaven! And thus, with a constant and joyous worship, they waited in the temple for the descent of the promised Comforter, as good old Simeon and Anna the prophetess waited for the coming of Christ; and every rising fear was suppressed, and every trembling hope was confirmed, and every incipient joy was increased; and so they acquired a preparation for the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit; and when he came, he found sanctified and glowing hearts ready to entertain him.

And have not we the same reasons for "praising and blessing God?" "It is finished." Christ hath "trodden the winepress alone," and wrought out our redemption. Single-handed he hath wrestled with our "last enemy" in his own dark dominion; and hurled him from his throne of skulls, a stingless and vanquished foe. Having spoiled principalities and powers, he takes his triumphal march toward the metropolis of his empire, and our captivity is a captive in his train. The chariot hath passed over "the everlasting hills," and heaven is vocal with the joy of victory. And whose heart withholds the song?

"Awake, awake, my tuneful powers!"

"God hath gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet! Sing praises unto God, sing praises! Sing praises unto our King, sing praises!" Who can pour out his soul to the Saviour in such strains as these from one of the Christian fathers?—"Let me see thee, O light of my eyes! Let me find thee, O life of my soul! Let me embrace thee, O desire of my heart! Let me retain thee, O my heavenly bridegroom! Let me never lose thee, O my glory and my God! my sweet comfort! my eternal blessedness!" Christian, dost thou love the Saviour? and will not love prompt thee to praise? What is praise but the overflowing of love—the heart leaping through the lips toward God? It is the atmosphere of heaven, and the breath of angels—the most reasonable service that mortals can render to their Maker—the most acceptable incense that sinners can offer to their Saviour. O, can one of us forget the love of Jesus, or withhold the grateful tribute of the tongue?

"Praise, flow for ever! if astonishment
Will give thee leave! My praise, for ever flow!
Praise ardent, cordial, constant—to high Heaven,
More fragrant than Arabia sacrificed,
And all her spicy mountains in a flame!"

V.—THE SOLEMN ASSENT OF THE CHURCH TO THE RECORD.

This is expressed in the "Amen" which concludes the narrative. It is wanting in most of the versions, and probably was not written by St. Luke himself, but subsequently added by others, as an expression of their faith in the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospel, and their hearty concurrence in "praising and blessing God." They knew what they assented to: they knew that they had followed no "cunningly devised fable," that their Lord was alive to die no more, and that his ascension furnished his people with abundant cause for gratitude and joy; and they deliberately and heartily added their solemn "Amen" to the record.

And who will not join the response? Who does not rejoice in his Saviour's return to heaven? Are we pleased at the joy of the husbandman, reaping the harvest of his painful toil; or the joy of the traveller, reaching the termination of a fatiguing journey; or the joy of the mariner, leaping upon his native shore after a tempestuous voyage; or the joy of the warrior, returning in triumph from a protracted and perilous campaign? Are we glad to see the captive emerging from the dungeon, or the exile recalled to his country, or the long-absent son welcomed once more to the home of his childhood? Does it gratify us to hear that the invalid is gradually recovering his wasted strength, or that the worthy poor have suddenly come into possession of an ample fortune, or that calumniated virtue has triumphantly vindicated itself, and put all its adversaries to shame? Do we congratulate the bridegroom on his nuptials, or rejoice with the patriotic statesman in his success, or make ourselves merry for the inauguration of a president or the coronation of a king? What, then, should be our feelings to see the Captain of our salvation triumphing over the last prostrate foe, and ascending from the scene of conflict to "the joy that was set before him?"

Who, that has sympathized in his sufferings and wept at his cross, will not rejoice to see him seated upon his throne, and "crowned with glory and honor;" no longer the man of sorrows, but an exalted Prince and Saviour—the supreme Ruler of the highest heavens—the one grand Absorber of all authority, and dignity, and glory—the great Luminary of the spiritual universe, around whom all lesser lights revolve, and from whom they derive their splendors?

The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, were waiting for his return to heaven. True, they knew no sin, and needed no sacrifice. But felt they no interest in the objects of his advent? Burned they with no solicitude for the development of the mystery? And when Christ ascended, brought he no gladdening intelligence to the ransomed and the unfallen? And when he entered the celestial Jerusalem, and resumed the abdicated throne, was there no reverent prostration of seraphic and cherubic legions—no rapturous chanting, by patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs, of "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" His labor of love on earth was finished with the blessing pronounced upon his people; and "the general assembly and Church of the firstborn" above were longing for his arrival, that to them might be made known the glorious mystery into which they had so long desired to look; and when he departs for this very purpose, O, who—loving him never so ardently—would detain him from a work which shall kindle new joy in heaven, and waken a song such as till now hath never thrilled its minstrelsy!

But we are personally interested in his ascension. When Joseph's prison-companion was restored to liberty and to office, he forgot the worthy Hebrew, and made no intercession for him to Pharaoh. But Christ carried his love with him when he ascended; and still he kindly remembers his people, and speaks of them affectionately to the Father; and all the

glorious occupations of his kingdom, and the songs of adoring seraphim, and the countless crowns that sparkle at his feet, cannot charm him into forgetfulness of their condition. Our "Great High-priest that has passed into the heavens," he is this hour pleading the merit of his sacrifice for them that are ready to perish; and through his sprinkled blood we "come boldly unto the throne of grace," and "the consuming fire" smiles benignantly upon our approach. And if Christ had not ascended, the Comforter would not have come, and there would have been no representative of the Saviour in the world, no miraculous authentication of the gospel, no inspired record of our redemption, no efficient application of the purchased mercy, no radical renovation of our fallen nature, no internal witness of our pardon and adoption, and preaching would have been powerless, and prayer would have been profitless, and virtue would have been homeless on earth, and humanity would have been hopeless of heaven.

Finally, Jesus hath gone up, and taken possession of the kingdom in our name; and when the promised place is prepared, and the number of his elect accomplished, he shall come again, and receive us to himself; and where he is, there shall his servants be—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; sharing the glory which he shares with the Eternal Father. O for words to depict the reward of the righteous! O for an adequate emblem of the triumphant spirit, and its glorified material investiture! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Eye hath not seen: ear hath not heard: heart hath not conceived. The brightest visions of genius fade before the ineffable reality, and the harps of the seraphim tremble beneath the burden of its song. O, what wisdom, and honor, and blessedness, are there! what ravishing revealments of mystery! what progressive development of the higher faculties! what new capacities of knowledge and enjoyment! what blissful fellowship with the elder

children of immortality ! what transporting views of God, and the wonders of his grace ! what amazing force and facility of motion ! what angelic beauty of form and feature ! what perpetual advancement from rank to rank, from sphere to sphere, from throne to throne, among the celestial powers and principalities ! Have you ever pondered the scriptural types of heaven ? Its ransomed denizens are kings with many crowns, conquerors with many palms, worshipping in a temple enlightened by the blaze of Divinity, led by the Lamb to fountains of living waters, losing their spirits in ecstasies of melody, inhabiting a city in which every sense hath its gratification, and every desire its fulfilment—a city adorned with all the jewelry of creation, and endowed with more than the immunities of Eden—a city whose jasper walls an enemy never scaled, whose pearly gates pestilence never entered, whose crystal palaces death never invaded, and on whose golden pavement tears never fell ! Behold what wealth of imagery, drawn from every storehouse of nature, to furnish a representation of the believer's future residence and reward ! Yet this is but a shadow of the glory to be revealed. Creation cannot furnish material for a worthy similitude. The blissful cycles of eternity alone can solve the question—"What is the Christian heaven ?" All that the Scriptures say upon the subject is an effort of language to convey an idea of what no language can describe ; assuring us, however, that whatever can be needful or desirable to redeemed and immortal man—whatever is pleasant in guiltless sensation, or delightful in holy consciousness—whatever is charming in scenery or enchanting in sound—whatever makes matter beautiful, or spirit happy—whatever suits the noblest powers, or the purest affections—yea, that God himself—God in all the plenitude of his communicable goodness—shall be included in the everlasting portion secured by our Saviour's ascension for them that love him !

If such is our interest in the event, how can we withhold our "Amen" to the record? Has Christ gone up to the Father? Cheerfully we let him go; since we are not the losers, but the gainers; since he cannot forget his people, and hath sent them "another Comforter," and ever liveth to make intercession for them, and will ultimately come again and take them to the provided habitation in the heavens!

Blessed Jesus! thou hast ascended in triumph, trampling our last enemy in chains, and winning for us a splendid and immortal crown! And shall we grieve for thy departure? We rejoice and give thanks to thee, "The Resurrection and The Life!" We love thy appearing, we long for thy kingdom, and shout our glad concurrence in thy praise! "Amen."

XI.—THE PERPETUAL ADVOCATE.

IN all nations and all ages, man, conscious of guilt and apprehensive of punishment, has felt the need of a mediator to stand between him and his offended Maker. Such mediators the pagans seek in their several subordinate divinities. Such mediators the papists imagine in the souls of departed saints. Such a mediator the Christian finds in “the Man Christ Jesus”—“God manifest in the flesh”—“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”—standing midway between the Divine Sovereign and the human rebel, and laying his hand upon both—uniting the two natures in his person, and by consequence equally interested in the honor of God and the happiness of man—his humanity assuring us of his sympathy and love, his Divinity giving merit to his sacrifice and prevalence to his plea, and both together qualifying him to be “a propitiation for our sins” and “the Prince of our Salvation.” “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”* Let us inquire into *the nature of his office, his qualifications for its fulfilment, and the benefits accruing to his people.*

I. “TO MAKE INTERCESSION” is to go between two parties, to plead with the one for the other.

Very different, however, is our Lord’s intercession for us, from our intercession for others. We intercede for others in

* Heb. vii. 25.

the name of Christ : he for us in his own name. We approach the Father for others through the merit of Christ : he for us through no merit but his own. Our intercession for others is a mere private deed of charity : his for us, an official act, a part of his priestly function, indispensable to the completion of his work. He died to atone for us : he lives to plead for us. As the Hebrew high-priest, having slain the victim without, presented the blood in the Holy of Holies, so the "High-priest of our profession," having made his soul a sacrifice for sin, produces and pleads his sufferings before the Father.

His sacrifice and his intercession are equally important and mutually dependent, being distinct acts of the same sacerdotal office. Without the sacrifice, there would have been no ground for the intercession : without the intercession, there would have been no efficacy in the sacrifice. The sacrifice renders the intercession influential with God : the intercession renders the sacrifice available to man. The one removes the obstacles to reconciliation : the other brings the adverse parties together. Therefore the two acts, constantly conjoined in the type, are equally conjoined in the Antitype :—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

But between the typical mediation and the antitypical there is an important difference. The former derived all its virtue and utility from the latter, and the supervention of the latter has abolished the former for ever. The Jewish high-priest entered into the Holy of Holies every year : Christ has entered into heaven once for all. The Jewish high-priest presented himself before the Divine Glory only at stated seasons : Christ is ever within the vail, sprinkling the mercy-seat with his blood. The Jewish high-priest had to atone and pray for himself, as well as his people : Christ needs for himself nei-

ther atonement nor prayer, and is wholly and incessantly occupied with the interests of redeemed men.

It has been a question, whether his intercession is vocal or voiceless—whether he pleads for us with words and arguments, or only by presenting his sufferings as the price of our redemption. It is a matter of no practical importance. We know that he has “entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” This is enough. He has ascended with all his wounds. He stands before the throne as a lamb newly slain. His presence there immortalizes Calvary in the memory of God. It is as if his crucifixion were perpetuated in heaven. It is as if he had carried his cross with him when he ascended, and planted it before the throne of the Father, and still hung writhing upon the crimson wood, a perpetual appeal alike to the Divine mercy and the Divine justice in behalf of all for whom he died.

Eschylus, a Grecian poet of illustrious name, was condemned to die. As they were about to lead him forth to execution, his brother, Aminius, who had distinguished himself at the battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Platea, and lost an arm in the service of his country, advanced in front of the judges, threw off his mantle, presented the maimed limb, and pointed to his brother. The silent appeal was effectual: Eschylus was pardoned and released. Thus—ay, and with a power and a pathos inconceivably greater—pleads for us the Divine Mediator. Aminius interceded before men: Christ, before God. Aminius interceded for his brother: Christ, for his enemies and murderers. Aminius interceded for a single individual: Christ for the whole human race. Aminius interceded for the pardon of a solitary offence: Christ, for the forgiveness of sins more numerous than the sands of the sea. Aminius interceded for a salvation from human penalty, and the preservation of a mortal life: Christ, for a deliver-

ance from Divine vengeance, and the bestowment of life eternal. Aminius interceded as a mere man, the equal of Eschylus, and the inferior of his judges : Christ, as God, Jehovah's Fellow, the Eternal Co-equal of the Father. Aminius had no plea to offer in behalf of Eschylus, but his own patriotic valor and suffering, the service he had rendered his country, and which his country had a right to demand : Christ pleads the voluntary, and therefore infinitely meritorious, surrender of himself—his immaculate soul and body—to the agony and the ignominy of an unparalleled sacrifice, “for us men and our salvation.”

And thus it is that he destroys the works of the devil. He advocates our cause against the accusations of our great adversary. He is “a friend at court,” counteracting in our behalf the calumnies of hell. Satan toils to widen the breach between heaven and earth : Christ seeks to restore the interrupted friendship, and bind the two worlds in a covenant of eternal amity. Satan claims our guilty souls as his lawful captives and prey—the outlaws of Heaven's dominion : Christ makes “intercession for the transgressors,” saying—“Deliver from going down to the pit ! I have found a ransom !” As he interceded for his disciples in the garden, and for his murderers on the cross, so now he intercedes for both saints and sinners before the heavenly throne.

II. But what are THE QUALIFICATIONS of an intercessor ? They are all found in “the Man Christ Jesus.”

Is it wisdom ? He is “the Wisdom of God.” In him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” His understanding is infinite, and his skill is infallible. He is thoroughly acquainted with the case which he has undertaken, and will certainly conduct it to the happiest issue—will certainly so manage it as to secure the salvation of all them that believe.

Is it faithfulness? He is "the true and faithful witness." He is "a faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God." You may safely trust your interest in his hands. He will not betray you. He will not deceive you. He is a true friend that loveth at all times—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—the same yesterday and to-day and for ever—without variableness or shadow of turning.

Is it sympathy? "We have not a high-priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." "In all our afflictions he is afflicted." That he might be able to enter into all our feelings, he visited our sinful world, assumed our suffering nature, was made in all things like unto his brethren, and tempted in all points like as we are. "Surely, he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;"

"And in his measure feels afresh
What every member bears."

Is it interest? He has made our cause his own. He has identified our salvation with his glory. He pleads for us with the ardor and solicitude of an elder brother. He pleads for us as the purchase of his blood, demanding in our behalf what he suffered to secure. He hath loved us unto the death. His honor as Mediator is connected with his success. He must succeed, or his whole plan of redemption is a failure, and the travail of his soul is lost. How, then, can he faint or weary in his work of love?

Is it influence? He is the "Only-begotten Son" of the Judge with whom he pleads. He is the "Well-Beloved" of the Father, with whom the Father is "ever well pleased," and whom he "heareth alway." There is between him and the Father a unity of nature and of will. The Son asks what the Father has expressly promised, and what he delights to grant. Can you disregard the prayer of your child, when he requests what you have pledged yourself to bestow, on condi-

tion of his asking? And is God less inclined to answer the prayer of his Son? Has Christ less influence with the Father than your child has with you?

“The Father hears him pray,
His dear Anointed One :
He cannot turn away
The presence of his Son.”

Is it satisfaction? He has suffered for our sins, and provided an effectual counteractive of their consequences. He has repaired the violated honor of the law, and vindicated the insulted government of God. He is the Lamb slain as our atonement—the Substitute that delivers us from the curse by becoming a curse in our stead. Without such an expedient, God could not have exercised mercy toward the guilty. Mercy moved in his heart, but could not find its way. Holiness, Justice, and Truth, each interposed an insuperable barrier. The outraged law must be honored or avenged. The debt incurred must be paid or punished. But the law is honored, and its violator may be forgiven. But the debt is paid, and the debtor may be discharged. Christ has satisfied, by his own personal suffering for sinners, all the claims of God and the universe against them. Here is the ground of his intercession, and the secret of his success. He pleads for us because he died for us. As our Mediator, he lives to claim what he died to procure. He demands the salvation of the believer as his purchased right. And thus “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” Yea, God can be just, and justify him that believeth in Jesus; but he could not be just, and disregard the intercession of his Son.

III. Such are the qualifications of our Advocate—such the gracious office he performs for us in heaven. And what are THE RESULTS? Has the Father pledged himself to grant his

Son whatever he demands for his redeemed? Then we have only to inquire what he pleads for on our behalf, in order to ascertain how we are benefited by his plea.

He pleads for further probation. The privilege has been forfeited a thousand times. Fruitless fig-trees, cumbering the ground, we deserve nothing but the axe and the fire. And often has the axe been lifted, and often has the fire been kindled. But as often has the dresser of the vineyard prayed for us, and therefore we are not consumed. Every moment is a purchased mercy; and if Jesus should cease his intercession, instant destruction would follow.

He pleads for the continuance of the Spirit. The agency of the Spirit is necessary to our salvation. He comes to communicate what Christ died to procure. His office is to reprove and convince, to enlighten the understanding, quicken the conscience, and renew and purify the heart. All saving virtue is attributable to his influence. He strives with men—meets them on their way to ruin, and wrestles to turn them back. He worketh in them, to enable them to work out their own salvation. All true repentance and saving virtue are attributable to his influence. But some “do always resist the Holy Ghost,” while others often quench his light and grieve his love; and he would depart from us, and leave us hopeless and unblest; but our Advocate is before the sprinkled mercy-seat, and the purchased grace is not withdrawn.

He pleads for the pardon of our sins. Even while we are going on still in our trespasses, he is praying,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Even while we are constantly crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame, he lifts his thorn-pierced brow and bleeding palms before the throne in our behalf. As he actually interceded for his enemies upon the cross, so now he is virtually crucified for them in heaven. But when he sees in us the signs of true contrition—when we begin to turn, penitent and

prayerful, from our evil ways—when we look upon him we have pierced, and mourn for our baseness and cruel ingratitude,—O, then it is that the marks of crucifixion in his lifted hands are most eloquent in our cause, and every crimson drop upon his temples becomes an effectual argument for our forgiveness!

“Five bleeding wounds he bears,
Received on Calvary:
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly speak for me:
Forgive him! O forgive! they cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die!”

He pleads for the acceptance of our services. There is no merit in our repentance and faith to recommend us to God; but our repentance and faith are rendered acceptable to him solely through the mediation of his Son. There is no merit in our prayers, nor in our praises, nor in our obedience, nor in our deeds of charity, nor in any virtue we can exercise, nor in any work we can perform—no worth, or influence, or utility, except what they derive from our glorious High-priest, who stands ever at the altar, collecting the offerings of piety into the golden censer of his merit, and presenting them as sweet incense to the Father. His sacrifice is the only way of approach to God. His advocacy is the only medium of acceptable worship. All our devotions—whether of prayer or praise—whether in the closet or the temple—must be addressed to the Father in the name of the Son—must be purified by his blood, and perfumed by his breath, before they can be well-pleasing to the Infinite Holiness.

He pleads for our union in charity. Just before his passion he prayed thus for his people: “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” And what he prayed for on earth, he still prays

for in heaven. He desires the union and harmony of the Church, as an elder brother desires the union and harmony of all his father's children. He sees its importance to the honor of his cause, as well as our influence and usefulness, and our mutual comfort and edification. Therefore it is an object very dear to his heart, for which he constantly prays. And shall we strive, and contend, and rend the Church into factions, and rally our belligerent forces around our party standards with a thousand conflicting interests, while Jesus prays that we all may be one in him?

He pleads for our entire sanctification. This was the object of his advent, and the end of his cruel sufferings. He came to "save his people from their sins." He "loved us, and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Just before he went to the cross, he prayed the Father to sanctify his disciples. And can he be less solicitous about it, now that he has ascended to his throne? Has he ceased, since his departure, to pray that God would shed upon his people the renovating and purifying Spirit? Has the lapse of eighteen hundred years wrought any change in his desires concerning the Church? Are we not indebted to his intercession for all the holiness we ever enjoyed, and all the hopes of holiness we cherish? And who will plead for sin, while Christ is pleading against it? Who will neglect seeking purity of heart, while Christ is seeking it for us? Who will be discouraged in the pursuit, while Christ continues his efforts in our behalf? Who will doubt God's willingness to bestow his largest blessing, while Christ ever liveth to claim for believers the residue of the purchased Spirit?

He pleads for our preservation from evil. His people are as lambs among wolves. They are exposed to a thousand temptations, a thousand delusions, and a thousand perils. They have no skill to shun the snare, no strength to resist

the assault. They will inevitably be conquered and captured, unless "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." Therefore Jesus prays for them:—"Father, keep through thine own power those whom thou hast given me:—I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." How remarkable were his words to Peter!—"Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not!" Was not Peter's salvation in answer to his Master's prayer? The object which brought him from heaven to earth, took him back from earth to heaven, and still occupies him there. Believer, Satan desires to have thee; but Jesus prays for thee! Thy enemy, as a roaring lion, goeth about to devour; but Jesus prays for thee! Thou wilt be sorely tempted, and thy whole life will be a struggle with evil; but fear not! Jesus prays for thee! The prince of darkness is mustering his forces, and setting the battle in array against thee; but be not dismayed! thy Moses is on the mountain, and while his bleeding hands are lifted in thy behalf, thou must prevail!

He pleads for our final and eternal salvation. Hear him: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." O, blessed consummation! Nothing is too great for Christ to ask on our behalf. He asks all that he has purchased; and he has purchased all that we can possibly desire or enjoy. He has made us heirs of God, and joint-heirs with himself. He has said: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." He has said: "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor; and where I am, there shall my servant be." What more could we wish? What more could he ask? Do you fear coming short of the promised rest? Jesus prays for you! He has procured you a place among the "many mansions," and has a right to demand your admittance there, and

the Father cannot deny his claim. When he ascended, the keys of the Celestial City were placed in his hand. He openeth, and no man shutteth. He shall meet you, with an angelic escort, at your coming; and an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom. Thus the hope of the saints shall be realized; and Emmanuel shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and his prayers for his people all answered, his intercession shall cease for ever; and heaven shall glow with its accumulated glories, and vibrate with a vocal joy, such as never before woke the thunder of its minstrelsy!

Such are the objects of Christ's intercession. Such are the benefits accruing to believers. Let us learn to appreciate. "We love him, because he first loved us." But who can estimate the riches of his grace, or render him an adequate return? It is related of Marcus Curtius, that when informed, by an oracle, that a great chasm, which had been opened by an earthquake, could not be closed till something very precious should be thrown into it, he went and plunged in himself. So Christ cast himself into the gulf that yawned to devour us all; and lo, to the believer it is closed for ever! The Son of God took our place in the universe, and wrought out our redemption in agony and blood. He saw the descending stroke, flew between it and the guilty victim, and quenched the flaming sword of vengeance in his own heart. Having died to redeem us on earth, he ascended to represent us in heaven. He is surrounded by adoring hosts of the sinless, and myriads of ransomed sinners are pressing into his presence, and every hour brings him new trophies, and lays additional diadems at his feet. But the unparalleled splendors of his triumph, and the glorious occupations of his kingdom, and the many-voiced anthem of his worship, and the satisfaction with which he welcomes the saints to their eternal habitations, cannot make him unmindful of the neces-

sities of our humble condition. He still prays for his suffering Church and his ransomed world; and will never cease till the last believer comes singing to the heavenly Zion.

“O Lamb of God! was ever pain,
Was ever love like thine?”

In vain we attempt to fathom the abyss—to measure the immensity. Can you imagine how a doomed culprit will love the friend that interposes his personal sufferings and intercession to save him from a shameful death? Can you imagine with what ardor, if he has aught within him like a human heart, he will devote his rescued life to the interests of that friend? Ah, my brethren! it is too poor an illustration of what we owe to our Immortal Advocate in heaven! Blessed Jesus! help me to feel the obligation I can never estimate!

“Too much to thee I cannot give,
Too much I cannot do for thee:
Let all thy love, and all thy grief,
Graved on my heart for ever be!
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing—so divine—
Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

But if we are always in the presence of God, why worship him through a mediator? If God is merciful and gracious, what need of an intercessor? This is the Divine appointment; and he who does not worship according to the method prescribed, does not worship at all; and he who does not come to the Father in the way which he has sanctified, does not come at all; and he who is not willing to be saved by the only medium which the Infinite Wisdom has revealed, cannot be saved at all. There is no true religion without Christ—no pardon, nor holiness, nor eternal life. Our services must be sanctified by his blood: our incense must be offered in his

censer. Poor guilty creatures, what can we do without Christ? Every moment we need the merit of his death, and the influence of his intercession. Luther used to say, "I cannot meet an absolute God." O sinner! how canst thou encounter "a consuming fire?" And such is God without a mediator. But God in Christ is placable—compassionate—waiting to be gracious—no less a loving Father than a righteous Judge. O that men could appreciate the grace that has so modified his relation to the guilty! Behold that prison, crowded with criminals. They have conspired against the best of monarchs. They have filled the land with violence, and waded in loyal blood. The hand of Justice has seized them, and they are condemned to die. Too late they lament their madness. It is their last night; and the clank of chains and the wail of despair make the gloom of their dungeons hideous. But who is this that enters with such an aspect of sorrow, and addresses them in such words of love? It is the son of their offended sovereign. "Unhappy men!" he exclaims—"I have sacrificed much, and suffered more, and perilled all, for your salvation. I come to conduct you to my father, and plead with him for your pardon. Arise, and follow me, and second my intercession with your presence and your penitential tears!" O, what joy there is among that guilty crew! what passionate expressions of gratitude! what glad haste of preparation! what tremulous solicitude for the issue! But this is a poor emblem of what Jesus hath done for you. Think what he relinquished when he exchanged his throne for a manger. Think of his agony in the garden, and his tortures on the tree. Think how he pleads for you before the mercy-seat, with a tongue in every reeking wound, and an appeal in every sprinkled drop. The tears and prayers of all heaven would be less eloquent in your behalf. A slaughtered Lamb, for eighteen centuries he has stood there, and shall stand till time shall be no more. For you, for me,

for all, he has obtained an amnesty—yea, a full reconciliation—all the blessings and immunities of adoption. Come, then, to the throne of grace, trusting in his mediation, and casting your sinful souls upon his infinite merit. His blood is as efficacious now, as when, in its first warm gushing, it saved the penitent malefactor upon the cross. The Smitten Rock sends its healing waters back to the gates of Eden, and forward to the end of the world; and the patriarch before the flood, and the last believer of Adam's line, are saved through the same Mediation. Here Abel found acceptance. Here Isaiah reposed in holy confidence. Here rested the faith of the apostles. Here triumphed the hope of the martyrs. And for me, a poor sinner, what other trust is known? I look up, and see heaven opened.

“There for me the Saviour stands,
Shows his wounds and spreads his hands:
God is love, I know, I feel!
Jesus weeps, and loves me still!”

Is Christ our Advocate with the Father? Then let us trust in his influence, committing our cause into his faithful hands, and dismissing all needless anxiety and all groundless apprehension. “I ought,” says an eloquent preacher,* “to study Christ as an intercessor. He prayed most for Peter, who was to be most tempted. If I could hear him praying for me in the next room, I should not fear a million of foes. But it makes no difference: he is praying for me.” O yes! he is praying for us; and Faith hears the voice, and joins in the plea; and “the Father is glorified in the Son,” and the believer is “accepted in the Beloved.”

Is Christ our Advocate in heaven? Then let us be his

* McCheyne.

advocates on earth. Does he plead our cause with God? Then let us plead his cause with men. Let us so identify ourselves with his interests, that we can say with the Psalmist, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Who of us can exclaim with Saint Jerome,—“O that the blasphemous would turn their envenomed tongues on me, and cease their persecutions of my Lord!” Who of us can appropriate the sentiment of Saint Bernard,—“Happy, if Christ would but condescend to use me as his shield!” Who of us can sing—

“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Nor to defend his cause;
Maintain the honor of his word,
The glory of his cross!”

Does Christ intercede for us? Then let us intercede for others. He is our example; and his perpetual prayer in our behalf is a perpetual lecture upon our duty to mankind. The intercession of the good often procures a respite or a pardon for the doomed. “Let me alone,” said God to Moses—“Let me alone, that I may destroy this people!” He could not smite while his servant interceded. The prayer of faith holds back the arm of vengeance. While the righteous pray, judgment delays, and

“Justice lingers into love!”

Pray, then, ye righteous, and give Jehovah no rest! Join your intercession with that of the great Advocate above! Weep and plead for the unbelievers, who are condemned already! See, they hang tremulous over hell, and your prayers must prevent their fall! See, the thunderbolt menaces them in mid-heaven, and your prayers must divert its vengeful aim!

O Jesus, inspire me with something of thy own infinite pity
for the perishing souls of men !

“ Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart
With boundless charity divine ;
So shall I all my strength exert,
And love them with a zeal like thine ;
And lead them to thy open side—
The sheep for whom their Shepherd died !”

XII.—THE HEAVENLY PARACLETE.

THE gospel is preëminently “the ministration of the Spirit.” Under the law, the visitations of the Holy Ghost were comparatively infrequent and extraordinary. A few favored men, like Gideon’s fleece, imbibed the blessed dew of his special influence, while all around remained

“Unwatered still, and dry.”

The heavenly manifestation was granted chiefly as the preparative for some peculiar work—the work of the prophet and reformer; and the Jews called it “The Daughter of a Voice.”—so small and still, and often inarticulate, the communication not always understood by the “holy men” themselves, who were the organs of its transmission to Israel. But under the gospel the Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, especially upon those who ask—is given liberally to the saints, and without measure to such as occupy the high places of Israel—like the precious ointment that ran down the beard of Aaron, even to the skirts of his garment—like the dew that descended upon the mountain of Zion, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This is emphatically “the promise of the Father,” variously recorded in the Old Testament, reiterated and amplified by the Divine Author of the New, and so signally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and in the subsequent history of the apostolic Church. And now, as

Bishop Taylor says, it is “no longer the daughter of a voice, but the mother of many voices—the author of divided tongues and united hearts”—the fountain of innumerable virtues and inestimable blessings—the heavenly Paraclete, procured by the Son, and sent by the Father, to abide with the Church for ever.

We would aid you, Christian reader, as far as we can, to a proper view of this invaluable gift. A full appreciation, only the gift itself can give you. Three points concerning the Holy Spirit will comprehend all that need be said:—*His distinct personality, his supreme Divinity, and his gracious mission.*

I. HIS DISTINCT PERSONALITY.

The Socinians teach that the Holy Ghost is only an attribute of God, or an emanation from God—that the term is a personification of the Divine power; a metonymy for the truth of the gospel, or a periphrasis denoting the Deity himself. Let us look at these theories :

Are we told that the term is a periphrastic expression for God himself? Admit it, and then tell us how God can send himself forth, pour himself out, breathe himself upon the Church, or proceed from himself. All these are scriptural expressions, and intelligible only on the hypothesis of a distinct personality.

Are we told that the term is a mere metonymy for the doctrine of the gospel? Admit it, and then tell us how to explain the following scriptures:—“He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” “The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself unto this chariot.” Is it the doctrine of the gospel that hears and speaks, and speaks not of himself, but only what he hears? Was it the doctrine of the gospel that talked with the apostle, and directed him to the chariot of Candace’s treasurer? Are not these plainly the acts of a personal agent?

Are we told that the term is only a personification of the Divine power? Admit it, and then tell us how the Holy Ghost "proceedeth from the Father and the Son"—how an attribute can proceed from the subject in which it inheres—how energy can exist apart from the agent by whom it is exerted? Admit it, and then tell us why honest men, and men inspired of God, in their epistles and discourses, constantly use language so liable to mislead their brethren—why teachers who generally select the plainest and most transparent terms they can find, so often indulge in the loftiest figure of passion and poetry, in the cool strain of mere reasoning, narration, and colloquy? Admit it, and then see into what tautological nonsense you degrade the word of God:—"Ye shall receive power after that the holy power is come upon you." "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy power and with power." "That ye may abound in hope through the power of the holy power." "In demonstration of the Power and of power." "By the power of the power of God." Who can believe the apostles guilty of such folly?

The Holy Ghost is neither a Divine attribute nor a Divine emanation, but a Divine person—a person in the same sense as the Father and the Son are persons—a distinct agent in the same Godhead.

His *appellations* prove his personality. He is called the Paraclete—the Counsellor—the Messenger; and the masculine pronoun—the strongest appellative of personality—is constantly applied to him.

His *attributes* prove his personality. He possesses knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness; can be pleased, vexed, grieved, offended, resisted, blasphemed; and the Scriptures ascribe to him all the feelings, volitions, and other essential properties of a personal being.

His *actions* prove his personality. He is said to come, to take, to give, to show, to teach, to strive, to move, to call, to

search, to seal, to guide, to lead, to bid, to send, to speak, to help, to work, to quicken, comfort, create, convince, reprove, inspire, anoint, witness, testify, prophesy, sanctify, intercede, dwell in the saints, and bear record in heaven—all which are predicable only of personal existence.

His *honors* prove his personality. He is associated with the Father and the Son, as a distinct person, and as really a person as either, in the formula of baptism given by our Lord to his apostles; also in the apostolical invocations, benedictions, and doxologies; and there is no intimation in any of these that the language is to be taken as figurative, or that less is intended than is expressed. If the Father and the Son are persons, so is the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is an attribute or an emanation, so are the Father and the Son. If this term is a metonymy, periphrasis, or personification, so are both the others.

II.—HIS SUPREME DIVINITY.

Macedonius and his followers admitted his personality, but denied his Divinity—taught that he is the chief angel—the most excellent of those blessed creatures employed by God in administering the affairs of the Church, conveying good suggestions to the minds of men, and leading them into the knowledge of the truth—therefore called by way of eminence, “The Spirit,” and by way of excellence, “The Holy Spirit.” Arius held him to be a mere creature, and a creature even of the Son, whom he regarded as another creature. We shall endeavor to show that these theories, and all others that regard the Holy Ghost as less than the very and eternal God, are destitute of any scriptural basis—that the Holy Ghost is God in the same sense that the Father and the Son are God.

He bears the *names* of God. Peter said to Ananias:—“Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” The inspired

writers frequently call him The Lord, Jehovah, and Jehovah of hosts. These are names of supreme Divinity; therefore the Holy Ghost is supremely Divine.

He possesses the *perfections* of God. Eternity, Immutability, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience, are ascribed to him throughout the Scriptures. The passages are too numerous to admit of quotation, and too well known to require it. All these are incommunicable properties of supreme Divinity; therefore the Holy Ghost is supremely Divine.

He performs the *works* of God. The creation and preservation of all things, the inspiration of the prophets and apostles, the gift of tongues, the working of miracles, the communication of pardon to the penitent believer in Jesus, the renewal and purification of the heart, the production of all the fruits of righteousness, the resurrection of the body, and the bestowment of life eternal, are all attributed to his agency. These are unquestionably peculiar prerogatives of supreme Divinity; therefore the Holy Ghost is supremely Divine.

He receives the *honors* of God. A certain American divine* declares that "No inspired man, saint or Christian, till John's death, in the year of the world four thousand and one hundred, ever prayed to the Holy Spirit, or asked him or thanked him for any thing." It is not true. The Holy Spirit was worshipped in the Jewish Church, and Moses and the prophets honored him as God. The apostles invoked and adored him equally with the Father and the Son. Were Moses and the prophets inspired and holy men? Were the apostles inspired and holy men? Did they worship the Father, the Son, and an attribute? Did they baptize and bless in the name of the Father, the Son, and an attribute? Did they invoke and adore a creature of God, an angel of God, an attribute of God, an emanation from God, or any thing less than God, or any thing else than God? Is he a jealous God,

* Alex. Campbell.

who will not give his glory to another, or allow the worship of aught beside himself? How is this to be explained, if the Holy Ghost is not God?

There is a remarkable saying of our Lord, that all sin may be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which he declares unpardonable for ever. There is no parallel to this passage in all the word of God. It is more terrible than the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, or the unapproachable pavilion of God upon Mount Sinai. The Jews had murdered the prophets, and now were ready to murder the Lord of the prophets, to whom gave all the prophets witness; yet were they within the reach of mercy; and not till they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost—not till they had rejected the ministration of the Spirit—the last and greatest proof of our Lord's Messiahship—did their guilt transcend forgiveness. What is the inference? Why is the crime so enormous, if its object is not God? What invests the Holy Ghost with such awful sanctity, that it is more perilous to sin against him than to sin against the Son of God—than to sin against God the Father—what but his equality with both, and the superior excellence of his dispensation? Is it conceivable that all other crimes should be within the range of mercy, while this alone excludes from grace, and banishes from hope, and devotes to eternal damnation, if the Holy Ghost is not God, but only a creature, an angel, an attribute, or an emanation?

In short, if the Holy Ghost is not God, the whole Christian Church, with very few exceptions, have been deceived ever since the days of the apostles; and the apostles themselves were deceived; and if Divinely inspired, as they professed, deceived by God himself; and if God does nothing ignorantly or accidentally, he intended their deception; and if he is wise and good, their deception has been a blessing to the universe; and consequently, error and falsehood are more beneficial than truth; and the Bible, the most useful book in the world, is at

the same time the most deceptive; and, for aught we can tell, the most useful because the most deceptive; and ninety-nine hundredths of its believers are deceived, and have no means of being undeceived; and all truth is fiction, and all faith is delusion, and all revelation is a lie!

III. HIS GRACIOUS MISSION.

According to John xiv. 16, he is sent by the Father in answer to the prayer of the Son, so that he is the gift—the messenger and representative—of both, and may justly be said to proceed from both.

Concerning the manner of this procession, much has been spoken and written, of very little practical utility. The original word for spirit signifies also wind or breath. When Christ imparted the Spirit to his disciples, “he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” And when the Spirit was more fully manifested on the day of Pentecost, “suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” These facts have occasioned some to suppose that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son something after the same manner as the breath from the human body. “The Holy Ghost,” says Lawson, “being the Spirit or breath of the Father and the Son, is equally related to both.” “As the vital breath of a man,” says Owen, “is continually emanating from him, yet never wholly separated from him, so doth the Spirit of the Father and the Son proceed from them by a continual divine emanation, still abiding one with them.”

This theory makes the Holy Spirit rather a Divine influence than a Divine agent. The New Testament does indeed speak of him as proceeding from the Father and the Son, but it is in the character of a distinct hypostasis. Of this, the following passages are sufficient proof:—“But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my

name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”† “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”‡ In the first of these scriptures the Holy Spirit is said to be sent by the Father in the name of the Son; in the second he is said to be sent by the Son, and to proceed from the Father; and in the third he is said to be sent forth by God, though he is called “the Spirit of his Son.” Hence it appears that he is commissioned by both—the messenger and representative of both; and this explains the fact of his being denominated alike the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

This argument is corroborated by our Blessed Lord’s speaking of the mission of the Holy Ghost as dependent upon his own return to heaven. “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.”§ From this passage it seems that the departure of the Saviour and the advent of the Comforter stand connected in the relation of cause and effect. “God withheld the gift for that glorious occasion,” says a well-known writer,|| “that he might thereby signalize the enthronement of his Son in the eyes of the universe, impress the minds of believers with the acceptance which their Mediator should meet with on his return to heaven, and demonstrate the certain prevalency of his intercession on their behalf by answering his first prayer for the effusion of the promised Comforter.”

“The Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not

* John xiv. 26.

† John xv. 26.

‡ Gal. iv. 6.

§ John xvi. 7.

|| The Rev. John Harris.

yet glorified." Jesus was yet the man of sorrows, travelling in the strong agony of redemption. And when he ascended on high, from the conquest of one world and the ransom of another, then he fulfilled his promise, and gave gifts unto men. But what gift could he confer, rich enough to grace his triumphal entry into the city of God? Had he melted down the planetary spheres as he passed them, and moulded every one into a jewel for a believer—had he condensed into diamonds the stellar nebulae of innumerable suns and systems, and poured them out, a sparkling cataract, at the feet of his followers—O, it would have been a poor donation in comparison of what his infinite love bestowed—that blessed gift which includes all conceivable grace and benediction—the Heavenly Paraclete, to abide with the saints for ever!

The influences of the Holy Spirit may be distinguished into *the ordinary* and *the extraordinary*. The extraordinary produced those miraculous signs and wonders which accompanied the preaching of the apostles, and constituted Heaven's attestation to its truth. Christianity, opposed by Jewish prejudice, and Pagan superstition, and all the natural principles of the human heart, could be established in the faith and affections of mankind by nothing short of a Divine authentication which should startle the world. Therefore, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came upon the Church, like "a mighty wind," with "cloven tongues of fire;" and forthwith those timid and unlettered fishermen became little less than angels—great linguists, logicians, and theologians—more than a match for the learning of the Sanhedrim, the philosophy of the Acropolis, and the eloquence of the forum—their faculties strangely enlarged—their apprehensions amazingly quickened—their minds stored with such knowledge as no time nor application could command—endued with supernatural boldness and energy—invincible by fire and flood, by cross and scourge; and at their coming death stalked away from his intended victim, and demons deserted their human tenements,

and Pharisee and philosopher alike bowed meekly to the name of Jesus, and tongues that had clamored for his blood and derided him on the cross acknowledged "his eternal power and Godhead."

The building completed, the scaffolding is no longer needed. These extraordinary manifestations were bestowed upon the Church, not as her perpetual inheritance, but only as the necessary authentication of the apostolic commission and teaching, to cease upon the thorough establishment of Christianity. Continued after this great end was secured, they would soon have lost their miraculous character, and failed to attract the attention of mankind; and thus their perpetuation would have defeated the design of their introduction.

But there are other offices of the Holy Spirit, of a more ordinary character, which are permanent in their utility, and essential to the salvation of the soul. The whole process of our spiritual illumination and renovation is effected by his gracious agency, and it is a work which no other agency could accomplish.

"The world lieth in the wicked one." What power shall break its guilty slumber, and dissolve the damning charm? Shall troops of angels come down to fascinate us with "the beauty of holiness?" Shall legions of demons be summoned to terrify us into obedience with the menace of eternal fire and chains? Shall the Crucified confront us with wounded hands, and thorn-pierced temples, and vesture dipped in blood? All would be ineffectual. The conscience must be quickened, and the heart must be renewed by a power having immediate access to our consciousness, and commanding whatever instrumentalities are most suitable for moving our affections and moulding our moral tastes. To this work nothing is adequate but the Spirit of the living God. He alone can subdue the carnal mind, "mortify the deeds of the body," "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," and "bring every thought

into captivity to the obedience of Christ." An angel was sent before Israel to conquer and drive out their enemies : God himself descends into our hearts to subdue and exterminate ours. The strong man armed is ejected by a stronger ; and the frequent assault from without is repulsed only by a superior power within. None but a God can bruise Satan under our feet ; none but an indwelling and reigning God can effectually overcome the terrible league of fallen passions and infernal agencies that war against the soul.

The chief means of the Spirit's operation is the word. Therefore he is called "the Spirit of truth," and the Bible is termed "the sword of the Spirit." It is the Spirit that gives the weapon its edge and the stroke its force. Without his agency, Divine truth would be as powerless upon the human heart as moonbeams on the frozen sea. The Spirit is the lens that collects the scattered rays into a focus, and makes them burn into the sinner's heart. "He sometimes brings home the law of God with such an energy, and visits the soul with such a vivifying power, that the whole inner man seems converted into conscience ;" and the sinner cries out in agony, "What must I do to be saved?" Then he leads him, by sweet persuasives and consoling promises, to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and diffuses heavenly peace and joy through the soul that he has filled with apprehension and alarm.

But he frequently works without the word, or any other visible means. Indeed, if he did not, there could be no possibility of salvation for by far the greater portion of the human race. It is thus that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men." He awakens and quickens the conscience, softens and subdues the rebellious heart, works in the penitent soul a saving faith, renews and purifies that soul, bears witness within to the mighty change, implants and nourishes all the fruits of righteousness, sheds

abroad the love of God in our hearts, enables us to will and to do of his good pleasure, strengthens us with might in the inner man, and seals us to the day of redemption.

This statement of the several functions of the Spirit is sustained by the ample testimony of Scripture. "He shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities—maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." And as every part of our salvation is the work of the Spirit, all the Christian virtues are called "the fruit of the Spirit," and the Spirit is denominated "the earnest of our inheritance."

And thus it is that the Spirit glorifies Christ. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He exhibits the knowledge of Christ as the most transcendent science, and the eternal life of the soul. He makes the gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. He bestows the blessing which Christ died to purchase, and effects by power a redemption already procured by price. By the word of Christ he achieves a greater wonder than the creation of worlds—the new creation of the soul. He holds before us this Divine mirror, that we may behold herein the glory of the Lord, and be changed by successive degrees into the same image. Christ is the pattern after which he works—the model by which he moulds the renovated soul. He makes the new creature like Christ, that

Christ may be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

There is one special function of the Spirit which must not be overlooked; it is of vast importance in the Christian economy: I mean the calling of men to the work of the ministry. Many instances might be quoted from the New Testament. It is evident that the primitive Christian Church set apart none to the sacred office without satisfactory assurance that they were moved thereto by the Holy Ghost. We have no scriptural intimation that this function of the Spirit would ever be suspended while Christ has a Church on earth. Miracles have ceased, because they have done their work; but a Divine designation and commission to the ministry of the word is still necessary, and will be till the end of the world. Here the Church has no prerogative; and the ordination of the sacred functionary by the imposition of hands imparts no spiritual qualification or Divine authority, but is only the solemn formal recognition of his call by the Holy Ghost.

Thus we see why the Spirit is called "The Comforter." His office is preëminently to comfort the Church. To all true believers, he is a perpetual spring of joy. Christ himself, while on earth, was the comforter of his disciples. But personally he could not remain with them for ever. He must appear in heaven for his people. But when he departed, he sent them "another Comforter;" and his influence is a far greater blessing than Christ's personal presence could have been, had he remained on earth to the end of time. His personal presence, however his teaching might impress, and however his example might charm, could never, like the direct energy of the Holy Spirit, have sanctified and saved the soul. Tabernacling in a human body, he could have occupied but one locality at a time, and multitudes could never have known him, and most would have heard him but once or twice in

their lives. But the Spirit, confined by no corporeal investiture, can operate everywhere at the same moment—moving a young man to the ministry in Boston, and quickening the conscience of a gambler in San Francisco—inspiring the appeal of a preacher in New Orleans, and softening the heart of a sinner in Nova Scotia—inflaming the zeal and charity of a colporteur in Paris, and restraining the rashness of a senator at Washington—sustaining the faith of a missionary at Canton, and defeating the plot of a murderer in Mexico—enlightening the Indian on the Rocky Mountains, and regenerating the devil-worshipper at Cape Colony—remonstrating with the Hindoo mother on her way with her daughter to the Ganges, and turning the weary hopes of an Australian gold-digger to treasures in heaven—impelling the Chinese insurgents to the subversion of the national idolatry, and breathing the peace of God over the Christian assemblies of Christendom—offering more than diamonds to the toiler in Brazilian mines, and soothing the last anguish of a British soldier in the Crimea—listening to the prayer of the Hottentot, and the sigh of the Siberian exile—pouring light upon the mind of the Patagonian, and warmth into the heart of the Greenlander—thrilling a missionary meeting in London, and refreshing a native prayer circle in Tahiti—converting the Jew at the gate of Jerusalem, consoling the mariner upon the stormy main, and cheering many an expiring saint with visions of heaven! In short, he can operate, in the same instant, on every human heart. And is not this better than the perpetual abode of Christ in person with his people? Had he sent “twelve legions of angels” to minister to every heir of salvation, the agency had been far less efficient. It is “as if Christ had turned himself into spirit, and poured himself forth upon the world.”*

* Rev. John Harris.

Such is the work of the Spirit. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The Church is a temple, and he the glorious occupant. The Church is a body, and he the living soul. And he "shall abide with you for ever." Consoling promise! The Captain of our salvation has returned to heaven; his apostles, with all their miraculous gifts, are gone; one after another, the watchmen of Zion disappear from the wall; and successive generations of the great militant host pass on to join the host triumphant. But amidst all the vicissitudes and bereavements of our Israel, the blessed and adorable Paraclete is ever with us; marches, like the pillar of cloud and fire, in the van of our tribes; sits like the Shekinah in our Holy Places; and shall never leave our tabernacle, till it is pitched in the promised land of everlasting peace, and God shall be all in all!

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption." Be thankful for the ineffable mercy. Cherish his influence. Implore his assistance. Depend upon his grace for your personal salvation. Pray for his outpouring upon the Church. Pray for his outpouring upon the world. And remember that the Father, for the sake of his Son, is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than you to give bread to your children.

And you, ye unconverted, as you value heaven, "quench not the Spirit!" It is a painful fact, that he must strive with sinners. It is only by conquering that he can save them. It is only by overcoming their pride, perverseness, selfishness, worldliness, wilfulness, love of sin, hardness of heart, and habitual unbelief, that he can "turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But he "shall not always strive with men." He strives with them as moral agents, and cannot violate their moral agency. Incurrible sin conquers at last the omnipotence of Love Divine. Then woe to the guilty—thenceforth for ever hope-

less and undone! It is recorded of the Jews, that "they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Appalling statement! Terrific warning! O, think what it is to have your best friend become your enemy—to have the only power that can save you—that has vainly sought so long to save you—arrayed against your poor soul in irreconcilable and eternal hostility—all his love converted into vengeance, all his long-suffering inflamed into fury, and all his melting compassion kindled into consuming fire! O, think of the absolute despotism of evil habit, against which all resolution is impotent, and all struggling is vain—the consciousness of damnation on this side the grave, and the horrors and the hopelessness of doom beyond! And as you dread these, avoid that moral apathy, judicial blindness, strong delusion, belief of a lie, which so often result from resisting the Holy Ghost!

XIII.—ANGELIC AGENCY.

SOCRATES believed himself constantly attended by two invisible beings, whom he called his demons—the one a good and friendly spirit, ever aiding him with his counsel: the other an evil and hostile spirit, ever seeking his injury.

This, and more than this, O Christian reader, is true of us all. The Church of Christ on earth is militant—has been militant from the first—will be militant to the last. Every disciple is a soldier, assailed by the hosts of hell, and guarded by the angels of God. We contend with a mightier force than that which besieged the prophet in Dothan; but we have the same embattled seraphim for our defence. We are beleaguered by myriads of invisible foes; but were our eyes opened, we should see the mountain yet radiant with horses and chariots of fire. Saint Paul speaks often of the conflict—describes the enemy, the panoply, the weapons of our warfare; and the inspired exile of Patmos saw the triumph, and heard the shouting of the victors. It is a fearful contest—a struggle in which three worlds participate, and perhaps ten thousand sympathize. The interests involved are infinite, and the prize to be won is incalculably glorious. Reader, I would impress you with the importance of action, and inspire you with the hope of victory. To effect the former, I must describe your enemies: to accomplish the latter, I must show you your allies.

I. Come, then, Christian reader, let us climb the heights of Zion, and reconnoitre the camp of the foe.

"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision"—deep their malice, fixed their purpose, firm their union, strong their entrenchments. Look at their legions, and survey their resources.

Why speak of wicked men, with all their means and methods of opposition? We have other and deadlier enemies—the myriads of fallen angels. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers—against wicked spirits in high places—the rulers of the darkness of this world."

The leader of the host is called Satan, the devil, the tempter, the deceiver, the seducer, the destroyer, the murderer, the wicked one, the old serpent, the great dragon, the unclean spirit, the father of lies, the prince of darkness, the god of this world, the adversary and accuser of the brethren, and a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour.

All this is descriptive of his character and his operations. Aware of his own comparative weakness, and the terribleness of the Divine anger, he wages determined warfare against the Lord, against his gospel, and against the people of his love. And is there aught unnatural in his audacity and his malice? Does not the criminal ever hate his judge, and the rebel rage against his avenging sovereign? It might be expected that Satan would hate the almighty detector and punisher of his crime, and that his rage would be in proportion to the rank from which his ascertained guilt has degraded him, the intensity of his torture, and the hopelessness of his doom. Verily, it might be expected that an archangel, ruined in sight of peers and subalterns, and driven from the abodes of the blessed into everlasting exile, would be inflamed with an indescribable fierceness and fury of revenge: that ages of bitter thought and baffled hate would tend to aggravate the im-

pulse, inspiring every feeling of wrong, and quickening every faculty of evil, and envenoming the whole being with a still more desperate hostility to Heaven and all his favorite children; and that, under such an influence, the outcast seraph would prosecute his reckless career of rebellion, in the very face of omnipotent retribution, and even with the full consciousness of adding weight to the chain and intenseness to the flame of his own avenging destiny.

Look at the operation of the same principle in humanity. How absorbing the passion! How complete the mastery! How every higher consideration vanishes, and every better feeling dies, and love loses its charm, and life loses its value, and fear loses its last tremor, and honor loses its restraining influence, and interest loses its conservative faculty, and the man becomes a tiger, and adds the cunning of the fiend to the fierceness of the brute, toiling for years upon his single purpose, renewing or modifying his plans as often as they are thwarted by accident or foiled by sagacity, watching with untiring vigilance, sacrificing food and rest, seizing every facility to forward his desperate design, till at length he finds an opportunity to wreak his long-cherished vengeance upon the victim! And if such is the human counterpart, what must be the force of the passion in so superior a nature—in a fallen spirit of such vast intellectual vigor, such keen and comprehensive impulses—a prince among the immortal sons of God, expelled from his place in heaven, in chains of darkness, damned and irredeemable!

Marshalled under this mighty chief, are legions of malignant angels, still impelled by that spirit which lost them heaven and hurled them down to hell. They are irreconcilably opposed to the government of God, and especially enraged against the cause of the Redeemer and the interest of his redeemed. They know that Christ must conquer and reign for ever; yet have they an unresting hostility to his incipient

empire; and if they cannot stay the progress of his chariot, they will at least line the path of his victorious march, and do whatever they can to annoy and afflict his militant followers. Against all who espouse the interest of their almighty foe they cherish the bitterest envy and hate. They cannot bear to see you ascending to the thrones which they have lost. Fain would they blot all moral excellence from the universe, and involve in misery as hopeless as their own every happy creature of Jehovah. O, what a jubilee of joy it would afford them, could they blast your budding hopes of heaven, and turn your dawning immortality into the blackness of despair! This is their strenuous and incessant aim. For this they pursue you through life, and press you to the very gates of death. Kindness they cannot exercise—compassion they never feel. They showed no quarter to your Captain—they will show no quarter to you. If you escape the everlasting chain and the unquenchable fire, it will not be from the cessation or the diminution of their malice; but from its utter impotency to cope with the almighty love of God, and the unwearied agency of holy angels.

These malignant enemies have many and great advantages; one of which is their superior spiritual nature. Could we perceive them by our senses, we might shun or resist them. But they are invisible and intangible. They assail us in secret, and hurl their fiery darts unseen. Perhaps this place is now thronged with demons. Were our eyes and ears opened, we might see them “setting the battle in array,” and hear their shouts as they charge upon “the sacramental host of God’s elect.” As spiritual essences, they have access to the mind—can enter into the heart, and dwell there. Human persecutors can injure only the body; but these can operate upon the understanding, the affections, and the will. Therefore, with reference to wrath and kindred passions, we are exhorted to “give no place to the devil.” Satan “put it

into the heart of Judas" to betray the Son of God, and "filled the heart" of Ananias and Sapphira "to lie unto the Holy Ghost." It is thus the devil and his angels wage against us so successful a warfare. It is thus our imaginations are corrupted, our judgments perverted, our perceptions obscured, our moral sense blunted, our evil passions excited, and our souls filled with darkness and dismay.

Their vast knowledge and profound cunning afford them further advantage. They are beings of a loftier order, and their mental faculties surpass immeasurably those of men. Perhaps they are capable of grasping, in one intellectual view, more objects than we in a lifetime can imagine. And their natural intelligence and skill are improved by an experience of at least six thousand years; and, for aught we know, six thousand chiliads more. Revelation has nowhere given us the date of their birth, nor the date of their rebellion. We know, however, that they sinned before our first parents, and instigated our first parents' sin. They are veterans in crime, and trained to the destruction of human souls. The apostle speaks of their "wiles," "depths," and "devices"—terms which imply a shrewdness in their plans, and a subtilty in their operations, requiring in the Christian warrior great wisdom and constant watchfulness to detect and defeat. Students in mental philosophy from the days of Adam, they understand, in all their bearings, the laws of suggestion and sequence, by which our thoughts and feelings are governed. They know our circumstances, our vulnerable points, our easily besetting sins. They lay their stratagems with amazing skill, and adapt their temptations astonishingly to the outward conditions and the inward habitudes of those whom they would seduce and destroy. They so time and modulate their whispers, that we mistake them for the voice of our own thoughts; and so conceal their agency, that, while we fancy ourselves floating down the stream of our own free volitions,

it is a demon's breath that fills the sail, and a demon's hand that holds the helm, steering the bark to ruin !

And they are as vigilant as they are intelligent. Certainly, they possess not the Divine attribute of ubiquity ; but, probably, they can transport themselves from place to place with a rapidity to us inconceivable. A stream of electricity makes the circuit of the globe in a moment ; and who shall say that embodied spirits do not move with equal or even superior velocity ? A beam of light travels twelve millions of miles a minute ; and who shall say that it is not outtravelled by our infernal adversaries ? Who shall assign the time for compassing the universe, to beings who dart through immeasurable fields of ether quick as the transitions of thought ? And who knows their powers of perception ? Who knows but that they hear the softest whisper from pole to pole, and see the minutest object from world to world ? And they are ever on the watch, passing to and fro in the earth by night and by day. If you go to the house of God, they are there before you. If you enter your closet, you cannot shut them out. They attend your path and surround your pillow. Wherever you are, whatever you do, they are with you—they observe you. O, it is a frightful thought, that, from the moment of our entrance into the world to the moment of our exit, we are watched by myriads of malignant eyes invisible to ours—that unclean and accursed spirits notice every act, every step, every word, every look, every thought, every motive, every feeling, every volition, every mental state and movement—ready to take advantage of the slightest circumstance to do us injury, and effect our overthrow !

And their audacity is equal to their vigilance. Vanquished on the field of heaven, they shifted the scene of warfare, and continued on earth their impious hostility to Jehovah. They enter his holiest places, assail his holiest servants, nor hesitate to confront the Infinite One himself. No sooner is a pair of

lovely beings, fresh from the hand of the Creator, and refulgent with the glory of his image, seen walking the groves of Eden, than Satan repairs thither, and undertakes their ruin. In the days of Job, he comes, among the assembling "sons of God," "to present himself before the Lord." In the vision of Zechariah, he stands at the right hand of the high-priest in the presence of Jehovah. When the incarnate God appears in Bethlehem, he stirs up Herod to seek his life, assaults him personally on the mountain, instigates Judas to betray him, Peter to deny him, Caiaphas to accuse him, false witnesses to testify against him, all Jerusalem to clamor for his blood, the Roman procurator to condemn him to the cross, and the ruffian soldiery with every circumstance of indignity and torture to execute the decree. And time has not diminished his audacity, nor softened the temerity of his subordinates. Deterred by no fear, they accompany the Christian to his interview with God, breathe the holy atmosphere of the closet, tread the hallowed pavement of the sanctuary, and stand by the messenger of Heaven in the pulpit. Unawed by the purity and the splendor of guardian angels, they obtrude themselves into "the chamber where the good man meets his fate," and battle for the soul of the dying saint "quite on the verge of heaven." In the daring impostor of Mecca, in the sacrilegious mystagogue of Rome, in the blasphemous infidelity of France, what see we but a superhuman hardihood and presumption, which we cannot help attributing to the agency—however disguised—of the devil and his ruined confederates? Obviously it is their purpose, if possible, to circumvent the wisdom of God, and counteract the omnipotence of his love, and drive the ploughshare of desolation over all his fairest works. Swift as lightning, fierce as vengeance, and more insatiable than death, they pursue their desperate aim, regardless of the gathering storm, and heedless of the flames of hell!

And they are beings of terrible power. Astonishing is their agency in ocean, earth, and air. Amazing is their influence over the minds, the persons, and the circumstances of men. Behold this once fair province of creation, converted into a vale of tears—a field of blood—the very lazarus-house and charnel of the universe: it is a specimen of their dreadful power. See them wielding the elements against the “perfect man” of Uz, smiting him with a sore disease, and moving the hearts of men to do him harm. Notice that “daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years”—“bowed together so that she cannot lift up herself.” Observe “all who are oppressed of the devil”—“tormented with divers diseases”—coming to Christ to be healed: one “lame,” another “leprous,” another “paralytic,” another “both blind and dumb.” Witness that young man, in whom an evil spirit has long held his residence; casting him often into the fire, and into the water; and when commanded to come out, rending his victim, and throwing him “foaming” upon the ground. Mark the demoniac of Gadara, “dwelling among the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones;” so strong in his agony, that no man can bind him; so fierce and terrible, that none dares approach, unprotected, his dismal abode. Such cases were common in Judea in the days of the Son of God—fiends, as if wrought up to the utmost fury of desperation by the advent of their Heavenly Conqueror, actually incorporating with men: turning their bodies into living tombs; engrossing and demonizing all their mental faculties; making human hearts the fuel of their own infernal passions, and human senses and organs the slaves of their own rampant impiety; till the poor victims, held as hostages to the power of evil, anticipated eternal torments in time, and realized an incipient hell upon earth. No wonder these accursed beings are called “principalities and magistracies,” and designated by other titles significant of so dread a

potency. Were it not for the restraining hand of God, and the guardian care of angels, we should have still more terrible proofs of their power. Who knows how soon the earth might be wrapped in dissolving flames, and the harmony of the spheres rolled back into primeval chaos, and the universe itself converted into one vast hell, throughout whose boundlessness nothing should be seen but horror—nothing heard but wailing—nothing known but woe!

And their activity is incessant, and their energy untiring. We act through physical organism, and soon become fatigued. But our fatigues are those of the body, not of the mind. Demons, not invested as we are with gross material frames, feel nothing of their attendant infirmities. Spirit is not subject to the laws of flesh and blood. It is not in the nature of spirit to exhaust itself by exertion. Its activity is untiring and eternal. Our dreadful foes, tenanted no tabernacles of clay, move with the freedom of thought, and perform the most astonishing things with an ease still more astonishing. They know nothing of our weary, halting, painful effort. A single impulse of thought may bear them a thousand leagues. A single wave of their wings may lift them from world to world. They have maintained a constant campaign against the Almighty Sovereign and all his faithful subjects ever since they first reared the standard of revolt in heaven; are as active and vigorous now as when, at the gates of Paradise, they set up their shout of triumph over a captured world; and shall never relax their efforts, nor lose aught of their energy, till He, whose single arm once routed them on Calvary, shall return, with the battalions of heaven, to bind all his adversaries in the bottomless pit—as strong to suffer as they are to sin!

And what arithmetic shall calculate their numbers? Doubtless, there are more demons than men. When Immanuel sojourned in Palestine, their prince could spare seven to tor-

ment one poor sinner, and in the bosom of another were denizen'd a legion. Satan is expressly styled "the deceiver of the whole world." All men are more or less subject to his influence; and the heathen nations, constituting three-fourths of the human race, seem entirely under his control. But as his power, though great, is limited—as he is a finite being, and cannot personally operate such an infinite variety of mischief all over the earth—he must exercise this influence, and maintain this dominion, chiefly, through subordinate agencies; and these agencies, to act in so many places, on so many subjects, at the same time—and that habitually and constantly, and in manners so various, and for ends so manifold—must be an innumerable host.

"From thrones of glory driven,
By flaming vengeance hurled,
They throng the air, and darken heaven,
And rule this lower world."

Reckon the earth's population at ten hundred millions, and assign a score of evil spirits to every human soul, and you have an army of twenty billions of fiends—a multitude to which the hosts of Xerxes, Alexander, and Semiramis were as the few particles in the hour-glass to all the sands of Sahara—to which the teeming myriads that marched to the rescue of the holy sepulchre, and the marshalled nations that rushed into the Crimean whirlpool of blood, are as the dew-spangles on a rose-leaf to all the waters of the ocean-world! And this frightful force—if it is not over-estimated—we have reason to believe is employed chiefly against the Church of God. Among pagans, papists, Mohammedans, and the subjects of other superstitions, with all the profligate and the prayerless of Christendom, they maintain an easy empire. The wicked are Satan's willing thralls, and require comparatively little effort to keep them in subordination. Apollyon draws off his

principal forces to "compass the camp of the saints." Around every believer, "in close and firm array," stand "legions of wily fiends." The fact that they are impalpable to sense is no argument against the reality of their presence. Could we but see them! The Persian host, with its steel-clad cavalry of a hundred and twenty thousand, its eighteen hundred scythed chariots, and its seven hundred elephants, each with his tower of archers—nay, all the marshalled myriads of antiquity, with all their terrible enginery, and the ten-fold more terrible agencies of modern warfare, and the superhuman machinery of Grecian epic in addition—would be only a child's plaything in the comparison!

Such are the Christian's foes: do you wonder at the Christian's fears? How can the lamb cope with the lion, or the dove wrestle with the eagle? If Satan conquered our first parents in the strength of their original purity, how shall we resist his legions, with our fallen, sinful, enervated nature? How shall we repel the assailants without, while we have so many traitors within? How shall we secure the magazine, full of combustibles, upon which showers of fiery shafts are ever falling? Have not multitudes already been foiled and captured by our foes? And many of them were among the wisest and best of our brethren. Witness the sinful anger of Moses, and the shameful idolatry of Aaron; the murderous lechery of David, and the deplorable apostasy of Solomon; Peter's profane denial of his Lord, and Demas's defection for the love of this present world. Ah, what a lesson of fear is the record of their fall! The slain are innumerable: the valley of vision is full of bones; and our hearts die within us, as we survey the dread Aceldama. And O, how often have we ourselves suffered from the superior sagacity and infernal valor of our foes! No wonder we fear our former captors, and cry out, with the prophet's servant: "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

II. But after this appalling survey of our enemies, let us return and take a view of our allies. "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."*

The Sadducees said there was "neither angel nor spirit." There are many modern Sadducees; but they are obliged to repudiate or pervert much of the word of God. The Scriptures everywhere speak of angels as real intelligences. Two of them—Gabriel and Michael—are mentioned expressly by name. They are constantly described as personal subsistences, possessed of understanding and sympathy, exercising volition and energy, praising God, conversing with men, and exhibiting all the essential attributes of rational agents. They communicated the mind of the Lord to the patriarchs and the prophets. They led Lot and his daughters out of Sodom; met Jacob in his return from Padan-aram, charioted Elijah over the everlasting hills, defended Elisha against the host of Ben-hadad, announced to the shepherds the advent of the Messiah, ascended and descended upon the Son of man, ministered to him after his temptation in the wilderness, strengthened him in the mysterious agony of the garden, appeared at his resurrection, sat in his empty sepulchre, and accompanied his return to heaven. And still they encompass the saints, as with horses and chariots of fire. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

Why, then, should we fear what man can do unto us? Angels are superior to man in his very best estate. Even in Paradise, while in his sinlessness he walked and talked with God, he was "a little lower than the angels." How much inferior now, degraded from his original rank in creation, and enervated by the deadly influence of evil! And shall we fear before a few despicable worms, when we know that we are surrounded by the armed seraphim? Let them smite:

* 2 Kings vi. 16.

an angel's arm is lifted for our shield. Let them imprison : an angel's tread shakes the iron bars asunder. Let them kill the body : an angel's wing wafts the soul away to God.

And why dread we the vengeance of infernal spirits ? Our heavenly protectors are greater even than they. We meet the superiority of our enemies with the transcendent superiority of our allies. If the former are dreadful to us, the latter are more dreadful to them. And O, it is bliss to think that, beleaguered as we are by foes, we are constantly guarded by such glorious beings—that immortal troops, in no earthly armor, are our companions in the march, and our helpers in the battle—that many, if not most, of the blessings which fall upon us with the copiousness of the rain, and the constancy of the dew, are scattered by hands that are often lifted in adoration before the throne of God !

We mentioned the deadly hate of demons. Far more intense is the love of holy angels. The Divine providence, and the Divine purposes, constitute the perpetual theme of their study ; and as these are most clearly illustrated in the history of the saints, it is around them especially that angelic interest clusters, and for them especially angelic sympathies are moved. The perfections of the Divine character, and the glory of the Divine government, constitute the element of their being, and the sunlight of their joy ; and as the various experiences of the saints—their alternate trials and triumphs—form the mirror in which these are reflected, it is here chiefly that they fix their delighted gaze, and here they exert their benevolent agency. Retaining all the original nobleness of their nature, those blessed beings regard the redeemed as their younger brethren—the latest-born of the great family of God—governed by the same principles, inspired with the same affections, and destined to the same glory. They look upon our interests as theirs, and hear in our songs the faint echoes of their own. There is an alliance, a congeniality, a divine

identity of feeling. Once there was alienation and enmity: their holiness could not coalesce with our sinfulness. But now "we are brought nigh by the blood of Christ," and the unfallen and the ransomed blend in one blessed society. They rejoice over us as long-lost jewels found—as long-lamented prodigals returned. They know what it cost Heaven to redeem us, and prize us as the purchase of Emmanuel's blood. Love spreads their wings and bares their arms in our behalf. Love renders their ministration a duty of delight. They love us more than demons hate us; and no stoop is too low, and no flight too far, and no effort too arduous, that can aid the consummation of our triumph over the malicious hosts of hell.

We spoke of our foes as spiritual beings, warring against us in secret. Of our heavenly protectors it is said: "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." Many of the Christian fathers supposed them possessed of subtile, ethereal bodies; approximating spirituality, but still material. This view, however, is averse to the representations of Scripture, in which angels are spoken of as purely spiritual beings, without any material investiture, however attenuated and transcendental. Like our enemies, they are invisible and intangible; and perhaps they can conceal their movements even from demons, as demons theirs from men. Unseen, they attend us in our solitudes, and mingle in our solemn assemblies. Whenever necessary, they can "take shape from the vacant air," and reveal themselves to vision. This seems to be a peculiar faculty of theirs. We know not that it is predicated, anywhere in Scripture, of the devil and his angels. Satan has often transformed himself into an angel of light; but when into the semblance of humanity? And as spiritual agents, good angels have immediate access to the soul. How could they rejoice over the repentant sinner, unless they knew the gracious process going on within him? They perceive our mental states and exercises; sym-

pathize with our loves, and joys, and hopes ; and perhaps are capable of communicating or modifying our ideas, and conveying important and influential truth into the mind, in a manner and with a facility of which we have no conception. As holy beings, they can suggest none but holy thoughts, and inspire none but holy feelings ; and whatever of either they impart to ours, is worthy of an angel's bosom. As servants of God, delighting to do his will, they are only the agents he employs to teach us the knowledge we need, and, in subordination to a mightier agency, to give the impulses which shall secure our triumph.

We reminded you of the intelligence of fallen angels. Far greater must be the intelligence of the unfallen. They are represented as being "full of eyes behind and before." Eyes indicate knowledge—eyes behind, knowledge of the past—eyes before, knowledge of the future—full of eyes, all knowledge, all intelligence. The spirit of prophecy seems to be a natural endowment of angelic intellect. An angel showed Daniel "that which was noted in the Scripture of truth," and informed him "what should befall his people in the latter day." Angels may be able to read all our future history, and trace the events of coming years down to the end of time ; at least, their intelligence is vastly superior to that of our enemies. Demons may err, for they have no wisdom but their own to guide them ; but the spirits of heaven are infallible, because they are directed by the infinite wisdom of God. The former have their perceptions obscured, and their judgments perverted, by sin ; but the latter, having never sinned, retain all their original vigor of thought, clearness of understanding, accuracy of comparison, and correctness of conclusion. And if evil spirits improve their mental powers by exercise and experience, much more the spirits of light and love, who know no moral impediment to their intellectual progress.

We adverted to the vigilance of demons. What vigilance can equal that of angels? Christ has committed his saints to their guardianship, and they love to watch the fold. "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." For this they descend from heaven, and patrol the earth by night and by day. They are ever faithful to their trust. They never forget their charge, nor slumber upon their posts. They line our path, and environ our pillow; watch our going out, and guard our coming in; prevent a thousand accidents, avert a thousand evils, and wall us in with shields of heavenly proof. They are darting about us, like the beams of light. They "are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the earth." No power of evil can avoid their scrutiny. Wherever a demon lurks, an angel watches.

We described the audacity of fiends. Compare with it the courage of angels. What menace can daunt, what violence can conquer, the glorious sons of immortality? With full confidence in their cause, their Commander, and their own superior might, they fear no power beneath the throne of God. To execute their Sovereign's mandates, and aid his militant saints, they would march unshrinking through showers of burning worlds. They never yet quailed before the cohorts of hell, nor fled from her terrible battalions. What was the wall of Babylon, three hundred and fifty feet high, and eighty-seven feet thick, with all its towers of marble and gates of brass, in comparison with the circumvallation of angels environing the camp of the faithful, more impregnable than "the mountains round about Jerusalem?" Demons might more easily pluck up the earth's foundations, than frighten from their posts these glorious warriors of God.

We said our enemies were beings of terrible power. Our allies are called "mighty angels," and "angels that excel in

strength." Artists have represented them as slender girls, with flowing ringlets, and feathered wings. Very different is their portraiture in the word of God. Manoah's wife described the face of one she saw as "exceeding terrible." Ezekiel, Daniel, and John, fainted in their presence. In Isaiah's vision, the posts of the doors tremble at the sound of their voice, as they cry one to another. In the Apocalypse, their chorus round about the throne is "as the noise of many waters and mighty thunderings;" and we see them waging successful war in heaven "against the dragon and his angels," and casting them out for ever. They brought the fire-storm upon Sodom, slew all the first-born of Egypt, and smote the Assyrian at the gate of Jerusalem. Not Pharaoh, nor Sennacherib, nor Belshazzar, nor Herod, could stand before these mighty agents of God. An angel sustained the Saviour in an agony which might have annihilated a world. An angel broke the seal of his sepulchre, and rolled away the granite barrier from its portal; "and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." In the days of the apostles, fetters fell asunder at their touch, and brazen gates flew open at their approach. At the last day, they shall go forth to gather the elect from the four winds to the throne of the descending Judge, and execute conclusive vengeance upon the multitude of his enemies.

We represented our foes as indefatigable in effort. So also are the angels of God. Their immortal faculties can never tire. Their delightful employment can never lose its zest. They thronged Emmanuel's standard in the very commencement of the campaign, and shall follow the Captain of our salvation till the last enemy of his reign is vanquished. Having undertaken the guardianship of the saints, they shall never forbear their sympathy, they shall never relax their efforts, till all are safe in Paradise. They accompany the believer into the valley of the shadow of death, conduct him

securely through the last peril, and compass him about with songs of deliverance. They rejoice to see the long-folded wing essaying its hitherto unconscious freedom in the sunlight of immortality. They stand at every gate of the heavenly Jerusalem, to keep it open night and day. They wait to welcome home the last victor, and see the last mansion occupied by its redeemed denizen. They watch the gradual accumulation of the "great multitude that no man can number," till they shall behold the nations of the saved clustering in triumph upon the everlasting hills. Then will their benevolent satisfaction attain its acme, and the completed work will be the consummated reward. We know not how many centuries this great struggle may continue, or in how few days its final fortunes may transpire; but we know that, through all its vicissitudes, the angelic legions shall be strong and swift to do the will of God, and help our human feebleness against our mighty foes; and when, at last, the signal of victory shall wave over the field of conflict, and Christ shall come to gather up the spoil, they shall go forth to summon the holy sleepers to the triumph, as joyously as they went forth to welcome the solar system into being!

And what though fallen spirits are an innumerable host? Are not the unfallen an immense majority? Did the revolt of Satan, with his legions, depopulate the city of God? or did it leave myriads still in their loyalty and purity, to maintain his cause throughout the universe, and defend his future Church on earth? "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"—not a solitary angel, but an angelic chieftain with his forces. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is in the midst of them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." These are the chariots at the noise of which the Syrian army fled, leaving their camp to the quiet possession of Israel—the chariots with which the mountain teemed

and flashed around Elisha—the chariots in which Elijah ascended to God. Enoch prophesied, saying: “Behold, the Lord cometh with myriads of his holy ones.” Jacob, in his journey, met a troop of angels, and called them “God’s host.” Daniel saw “the Ancient of days” upon his throne: “thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” Saint John, in the Revelation, “beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Christ told Peter that he could call to his aid “twelve legions of angels”—eighty-four thousand. Yet these probably would have constituted comparatively but a small detachment of the troops of God. Bildad asks, “Is there any number of his armies?” Paul declares, “Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels.” How shall we estimate the myriads of our allies? The earth, with its ten hundred millions of human inhabitants, is only a sand-grain in the universe. The milky way that spans our firmament is but a cluster of countless spheres, every one of which is evidently self-luminous, and probably the dispenser of light to a planetary system like our own. The telescope reveals to us more than three thousand such clusters. And what are these teeming suns, with their rotary systems of dependent worlds? Deserts all, and unpeopled? Are there no eyes to behold their scenes of celestial beauty—no wings to soar through those immeasurable fields of splendor? Who dare say that they are not the mansions of unfallen blessedness? Who dare say that they are not swarming with sinless and immortal life? Who dares say that angels descend not from every sphere, to guard the path of our pilgrimage, and aid us in our contest with the powers of darkness? O, multiply the drops of the sea by the sands of the shore, the blades of the field by the leaves of the forest, the dew-gems of morning by the sunbeams of noontide,

but still you cannot reach the number of your allies ! “ Fear not, for more are they that be with us than they that be with them.”

Behold, my brethren, the importance of faith to allay our fears. Children are apt to be afraid by night, not because there is danger, but only because it is dark. The prophet's servant trembled, when he saw the Syrian host at the gate of Dothan, and knew not that the angels of God encompassed the city as a wall of fire ; but when his eyes were opened in answer to the prophet's prayer, and he saw mountain and sky teeming with the cavalry and artillery of heaven, what a delightful sense of security must have taken possession of his soul ! And we, in our ignorance and unbelief, often quail before our enemies, and are ready to yield to despair ; but had we always a lively apprehension of the presence and agency of our angel guardians—could we behold the glorious reinforcements which are sent in every emergency from the New Jerusalem—we should take up the song of the Psalmist—“ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear !” and with a joyful confidence, inspiring every heart, and nerving every hand, the Church militant would march through the wilderness, with a voice of jubilee issuing from all her tribes, like the anthem of the resurrection !

XIV.—THE HUMAN HEART.

IN the fifth century arose Pelagius and Celestius, denying that we inherit from Adam a constitutional depravity, teaching that we are born as pure as our first father was created, and are capable of pleasing God by our own natural powers, without any special aid or impulse of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine, variously modified, has descended to the present day; and is now held, in our own country, by several sects calling themselves Christians. The English Reformers regarded it as a pernicious heresy, against which they felt bound to record their solemn protest; and this protest, substantially, all the orthodox Churches of Protestant Christendom have incorporated in their creeds.

The question is certainly one of great importance. Christianity presents itself to us as a remedial economy; and our estimate of the remedy must correspond to our estimate of the disease. If we think lightly of human guilt and corruption, we shall think lightly also of the atoning Sacrifice and the renovating Spirit. If we regard our sinfulness as of slight inveteracy, we shall certainly regard the gospel as of little value. It is well, therefore, that we understand the malady of our constitution and the misery of our condition, that thus we may be prepared to lay hold on the hope which is set before us in the mediation of Christ and the merciful help of the Holy Spirit. We shall endeavor to show that man is naturally corrupt and sinful, "very far gone from

original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."

I. But we must *define the doctrine* before we proceed to its proof. What, then, is that native depravity of which we speak? What is the true character and state of the unrenewed heart?

The Holy Scriptures teach us that Adam was the federal representative of his race; that his moral acts involved our moral destinies; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that the virus of his depravity has descended through all the millions of his posterity, in consequence of which every man is naturally destitute of good, and constantly inclined to evil.

This native corruption is sometimes called "original sin." The term is a metonymy, the cause being put for the effect. "Sin is the transgression of the law." Literally, original sin is the transgression of our first parents. Our inherent depravity is the legitimate consequence.

Sometimes we use the term "total depravity." This is liable to be mistaken, and ought to be carefully guarded. By total depravity, we mean an utter destitution and incapability, by nature, of moral virtue. We do not mean that there is not, and cannot be, any moral virtue in man; but we mean that there is none by nature, and can be none but by grace.

This inherent depravity is often spoken of as universal. By this expression it is not intended that all are equally guilty, or that all possess the same evil propensities in the same degree. The Scriptures refer to different degrees of punishment; and if punishment is proportionate to guilt, there must be different degrees of guilt. In hell all will be totally depraved, but all will not be equally guilty. Men appear to differ as much in their moral dispositions as in their

mental faculties. Some are mild, tender, and generous; while others are supremely selfish and vindictive. Some display much candor, benevolence, and integrity; while others seem quite destitute of these amiable qualities. A great variety of temper may often be met with among a number of children educated under the same domestic influences.

What, then, is the doctrine of native depravity? Does it imply the possession of every possible evil in full development and exercise? Certainly not. This were naturally impossible. Some vices are incompatible with others; as ambition with indolence, and covetousness with prodigality. One evil principle may hold another in check. Every unregenerate man has his dominant sin; and perhaps it keeps down several others, which else would assert the throne.

Nor does it imply that men are as bad as they can be. They might break over all the restraints of religion and society in their headlong career of crime. The habit of evil increases the capacity of evil. There is a growth in vice, as in virtue. Evil men and seducers naturally wax worse and worse; and it is philosophical to suppose that the finally impenitent will be eternally progressing in sin.

Nor does it imply a destitution of conscience. Every man has a conscience. It is a part of our moral constitution. Without a conscience, you could not feel yourself a sinner. In proportion to the power of conscience is the sinner's sense of guilt. Conscience must exist in hell: this is the undying worm and the unquenchable fire; yet in hell depravity will be hopeless.

Nor does it imply an utter want of Divine influence. God can impart his Holy Spirit to a nature that is wholly corrupt; and there is ample proof of its impartation, in some measure, to unconverted and impenitent men. Otherwise, none could ever repent, none could ever be renewed. "In me, that is, in my flesh"—in my fallen nature—"dwelleth no good

thing." Every virtuous desire, purpose, principle, is the product of the grace of God.

Nor does it imply the privation of moral agency. By moral agency we mean freedom to obey or disobey law. All that is necessary to such freedom men certainly possess. It was lost in Adam, but is restored in Christ. If man were not a moral agent, he could not sin, and would not be responsible for his conduct. If moral agency were destroyed by total depravity, it must be impaired by partial depravity; and the palpable contradiction would follow, that just so far as a man is depraved, so far he is sinless, because incapable of sinning.

The Bible doctrine of man's original corruption is the following:—No man by nature loves God, or delights in his service. The natural man lives to himself. God is not in all his thoughts. There is no fear of God before his eyes, no practical recognition of his authority, no grateful acknowledgment of his goodness. His motives are supremely selfish, his pursuits sensual, his tempers impious, his ambitions unholy, his imaginations vain, except in so far as the evil of his nature is restrained, and his character modified, by the grace of God. An angel obeys God from inclination, from the spontaneous impulse of his own nature; but man, left to himself—no restraining influence, no Divine assistance, no dread of punishment, no hope of reward—would be wholly devoid of good, and wholly devoted to evil. "Yea, also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."*

II. This is the doctrine which we now *proceed to prove*—*first*, from the Holy Scriptures; and *secondly*, from human observation and experience.

1. The Holy Scriptures teach this doctrine, both by explicit statement, and by obvious implication.

* Eccl. ix. 9.

God created man in his own image, after his likeness. This image and likeness consisted in righteousness and true holiness. But man lost the impress, for he became a sinner. Then it is said, "Adam begat a son in his own image, after his likeness, and called his name Seth."* Now this image and likeness could not be the original in which man was created. The parent could not transmit a quality which he did not possess. The corrupt tree could not produce good fruit. The sinner could not beget a saint. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "What is man, that he should be clean; and he that is born of woman, that he should be righteous?" That the offspring of sinful parents should be born sinless, is a natural impossibility. A demon might as well beget an angel. Seth was the sad inheritor of Adam's sinfulness; and has doubtless transmitted to all his posterity what he inherited from the great progenitor.

Just before the flood, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."† An appalling description of the universality and the inveteracy of human corruption. The *heart*, the *thoughts* of the heart, the *imagination* of the thoughts, *every* imagination was *evil*, was *only* evil, was only evil *continually*. And this was not the character merely of a few; for the term man includes the whole race; and lest its extension should be mistaken, it is added—"All flesh had corrupted his way," and "the earth was filled with violence."

Immediately after the flood, God declares that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."‡ This also affirms the universality of human degeneracy. The term embraces all, and the words were spoken when none but Noah and his family were living upon the earth. And this univer-

* Gen. v. 3.

† Gen. vi. 5.

‡ Gen. viii. 21.

sal degeneracy is represented as inherent and innate—not the result of education and pernicious example, but of a natural inclination to sin, as the earliest development of character. And with this agrees the Psalmist—"The wicked go astray as soon as they are born;" and the Preacher—"The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;" and the Prophet—"Behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart."

More than seventeen hundred years later, Jeremiah wrote:—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Here again is universal and total depravity. The description is corroborated by the Great Teacher, six hundred and forty years afterward:—"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: all these things come from within, and defile the man."† As Mr. Watson observes, this could not be true if man were naturally pure. All these things would come from without, and not from within. The heart must be corrupted by outward circumstances, before it could be a corrupter.

According to Saint Paul, the above scriptures furnish a true picture of the Jewish as well as the Gentile heart. He quotes from the fourteenth Psalm, to prove the universality of innate depravity; and to this source he attributes all the actual wickedness of men:—"What, then? Are we better than they? No: in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, There is none righteous—no, not one: there is none that understandeth: there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way: they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good—no, not one: their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they

* Jer. xvii. 9.

† Matt. xv. 19.

have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know," adds the apostle, "that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Then he goes on to argue that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" and assigns as a reason, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*

These passages teach the doctrine of native depravity by *explicit statement*. Others teach it by *obvious implication*, and the evidence is equally conclusive.

Satan is called "the god of this world," and it is said that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." We understand these expressions to refer to an intelligent personal agent, by whom the great mass of mankind are enslaved. But admit, as some imagine, that Paul and John speak only of a *principle* of evil; and the inevitable conclusion follows, that man is under the influence of an evil principle, which is even worse than the domination of an evil agent.

"Christ came into the world to save sinners"—"to seek and to save that which was lost." It is a safe rule to estimate the extent of an evil by the provision made for its remedy. On this principle the apostle argues,—"If Christ died for all, then were all dead." This death could be no other than a spiritual—the alienation of the soul from God. The entire scheme of the gospel proceeds on the supposition of man's native depravity; and to deny this doctrine, as argued by Doctor Chalmers, is to repudiate the whole system of Christianity.

* Rom. iii. 9-19, 23.

“As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; for as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* Here, and in the following verses, we have a contrast between Adam and Christ—the evils in which we are involved by the former, and the blessings to which we are restored by the latter. But if the blessings are spiritual, so also must be the evils; else there is no ground for the contrast. Christ restores what Adam lost. Unless we admit the doctrine of the fall and consequent corruption of our race, there is no force in the passage.

In the epistle to the Romans,† Paul describes a contest between the flesh and the Spirit, and illustrates it by a reference to his own experience previous to his conversion. He speaks of himself as “carnal, sold under sin”—doing that which he allowed not, and hating that which he did—reason and conscience always on the side of right, but the flesh lusting against the spirit, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. Then he exclaims, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Nor less conclusive are all those passages which speak of the nature and the necessity of regeneration. Christ said to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God: that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”‡ The apostle draws an interesting contrast between the saint and the sinner.§ The one is “after the flesh,” and the other is “after the Spirit.” The one is “carnally-minded,” which “is

* Rom. v. 18, 19.

† John iii. 3, 6, 7.

‡ Rom. vii. 14–24.

§ Rom. viii. 5–10.

death;" the other is "spiritually-minded," which "is life and peace." And the difference is ascribed entirely to the renewing grace of God. In another place* he describes this change as a quickening, a resurrection, a new creation in Christ Jesus. In short, the New Testament constantly opposes to each other "the flesh" and "the Spirit"—"the lusts of men," and "the will of God"—"the things that be of men," and "the things that be of God"—"the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," and the new man which after God is "created in righteousness and true holiness." All these representations are irreconcilable with the notion of man's native purity; and, in connection with the foregoing scriptures, abundantly confirm the declaration of the royal Preacher:—"Yea, also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

2. Let us now contemplate the actual state of our world, and the manifest developments of human character, and see whether these teachings of the Bible are corroborated by facts in the observation and experience of mankind.

Our dependence upon God is absolute and universal. Our existence itself is not more truly his gift, than all that renders existence desirable. To his goodness we are indebted for the air we breathe, the food we eat, the raiment we wear, the health and vigor of our bodies, the mental powers whose exercise affords us so much pleasure, the friends and relations whose love constitutes so large a share of our happiness, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, sunshine and shower, the joy of our activity, and the tranquillity of our repose—all that sustains the system, pleases the palate, gratifies the ear, fascinates the eye, or yields satisfaction to the soul. And how are men affected by all this munificence and bounty? Is our gratitude always commensurate with our

* Eph. ii. 1-7.

benefits? Do we constantly acknowledge God in his gifts? Do we habitually attribute all to the Divine goodness? Are the most wealthy and prosperous apt to be the most thankful and devout? Are those who feel no want and suffer no adversity commonly the most forward to praise the Supreme Benefactor? Alas, the contrary! God is forgotten in the enjoyment of his gifts. All is ascribed to chance, to fortune, or to human prudence and industry. Gratitude diminishes as obligation increases; and the most favored of Providence are the most irreligious and insensible of men.

But God has bestowed one greater gift—greater than any—greater than all. Had he given us all the wealth of the world—had he parcelled out among us the planetary orbs—had he bequeathed each of us a sun, with all his system of dependent spheres—had he constituted every one the proprietor of a whole nebulæ of stars, each star the centre of a resplendent circumvolving host—it would have been “less than nothing and vanity” in comparison with this “unspeakable gift.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Jehovah’s Fellow became incarnate, and died for the redemption of his enemies. One would think this were enough to convert every human soul into a seraph, and every human utterance into a song. What is the fact? Does the heart bound with joy, and burst with praise, at the announcement of “so great salvation?” Alas! it is heard with indifference, if not with scorn. There is nothing else to which men show such apathy, from which they often turn with such disdain. The proffer of eternal mercy is slighted as an idle song, and its publisher is hated as a messenger of evil tidings, and an enemy to his race. Is not this the most conclusive evidence of a depraved heart? Ingratitude is universally condemned. It implies a moral dereliction—a baseness of nature—which no man ever sought to

justify. Accuse your neighbor of ingratitude, and he may deny the charge, but will never vindicate the disposition. Now, the guilt of ingratitude is in proportion to the value of the benefit, and the condescension of the benefactor. Therefore ingratitude to God is stronger proof of moral degeneracy than ingratitude to all other beings; and ingratitude for the gospel—the only relief for our spiritual wants, and the only remedy for our spiritual woes—evinces a greater baseness and corruption than ingratitude for all his other gifts. Yet this disposition is one of man's earliest developments of moral character. It is born with us, and proves our depravity innate. It prevails everywhere, and proves the depravity universal.

Take another fact. In the natural world, the nature of different substances is known by their affinities. So in the moral world, the innate character of man is known by the objects of his affection. Ascertain the company your neighbor keeps, and you have an infallible clue to his character. Virtue and vice have no mutual affinities. Suppose in your town a person of unusual virtue, suavity, and benevolence. He is ever easy of access, exceedingly kind and conciliatory in his manners, and acts always from the noblest motives, "without partiality and without hypocrisy." His doors are open daily, his table richly spread for your entertainment, and every guest—the meanest—welcomed with sweetest words and blandest smiles. He is a man, too, of most varied and extensive knowledge, and wonderful discrimination and wisdom; and continually ready, with the utmost affability and cordiality, to express his mind clearly and fully to all who ask his counsel. Now, if his neighbors are indisposed to seek his society, cultivate his friendship, and consult as they have need his superior wisdom—if they shun his presence, decline his invitations, spurn his proffered kindness, and eye him askance as a foe—what opinion shall we form of their tastes and their tendencies? There is one whose knowledge is perfect, whose wisdom is

infinite, whose decisions are infallible—who interests himself in our condition, pities all our perplexities and sorrows, and is ever ready to impart counsel and relief—whose benevolence is greater than human tongue can tell, or human heart conceive—who never withheld a favor from a sincere and confiding applicant—who is able to do for us more than we can ask or think—who invites all to come and make known their needs, with the assurance of a prompt and full supply. Now if man's heart were right, he would say: "It is good for me to draw nigh unto God." He would delight in the Divine presence and communion. He would endeavor to maintain a constant intercourse with his Maker. What is the fact? Does the natural man take pleasure in devotion? No; he "restraineth prayer before God." If sickness, or calamity, or the fear of death, urges it upon him, it is a task submitted to with reluctance, and not a privilege embraced with joy. Why this aversion, if the heart is not wrong? Why is prayer the last resort, and the least welcome of all our duties? Why do we view with indifference, or avoid with disgust, the most splendid and perfect assemblage of moral attributes in the universe, if there is not within us an innate dislike of goodness—an inherent baseness, perverseness, and impurity of soul?

Again: We are conscious of immortality. There are thoughts that wander through eternity—voices within us which echo in other worlds, and tell of strange things beyond the tomb. Why are we so inattentive to these heart-prophecies of a life to come? Why are we so regardless of the glorious destinies which the gospel develops to our faith? If we were innocent and holy, it would be a joy to think of living for ever. We should look forward to other scenes and associations, and rejoice in the revelation of an endless being and an endless blessedness. Visions of celestial wonders would visit us in dreams, and the bliss of those who walk to and fro

in the light of God's countenance would ravish our hearts with the ineffable delights of hope, and gold and diamonds would lose their value in the contemplation of the jewelled walls of the New Jerusalem; and all the pomp and splendor of earth would fade away in the anticipation of that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and the concord of sweet sounds below would cease to charm the ear that listens for the song of the saints and the seraphim. The fact, alas! is far different. The natural man dreads the contemplation of the future—shudders to look into eternity, as into some dreary bottomless pit. Ah, what a chilling prospect to him is that of living for ever! How eagerly he returns from a sanctuary survey of immortality, to the scenes of earth and time! With what reluctance he relinquishes that which shall soon be to him as if it had never been! Ask him, and he will tell you, indeed, that he believes himself immortal—that he deems himself destined, in a few days, to plunge into a bottomless and shoreless sea of spirits; yet all his feelings and all his faculties are occupied with this inch of soil—this moment of duration; and death finds the immortal being constructing his frail house of shells upon the sands of an ocean whose waves shall quickly demolish his work and bear away the builder. Strange contradiction! Incredible stupidity! Every thing else seems to know its appointed place and season. The deep knows its bounds; and the tide knows its periods; and the earth knows her revolutions; and the seasons know their kindly vicissitudes; and every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and every reptile in the dust, and every insect on the gale, knows its assigned home and its provided nourishment. But man—man only—has forgotten his origin and his end, and is endeavoring to fill his vast capacity with a point, and satisfy his immortality with a moment—regardless of his native home, his Father's house, and totally unconcerned about his everlasting future—strangely

lost in the sensual, while the spiritual is perpetually soliciting his attention—wholly devoted to the airy vanities of earth, while the substantial realities of heaven are constantly claiming his affections—pursuing the dancing mock-fires through the marsh of time, while the glorious panorama of eternity, with its mountains of gold and amethyst, fills all the surrounding horizon. How is this perversion and degradation of all his feelings and faculties to be accounted for, if there is not an inherent tendency to evil—if the original purity and splendor of his nature has not been dreadfully sullied by sin?

Once more: How are we to account for the universal prevalence of crime, in all nations, and in every age? Glance over the page of history, and what is it but a record of human folly and human sin? See Cain murdering his brother within sight of the cherub-guarded gate of Eden. See the deluge sweeping away the corruption and violence which neither the persuasions of Mercy nor the menaces of Justice could restrain. See the fire-storm of vengeance consuming the sin of Sodom—the moral nuisance which a holy moral Governor could no longer tolerate. See the seven nations of Canaan filling up the measure of their iniquities, by their cruel and degrading superstitions, their idolatries, blasphemies, sacrilege, and universal corruption and profligacy, abusing the Divine forbearance, and insulting the Divine holiness, till doomed to the exterminating sword of Israel. See the sons of Jacob—the chosen and peculiar people—emancipated by miracle from the iron rule of Pharaoh, fed with bread from heaven, and guided by the pillar of God—plunging into the grossest sensualism, and practicing the most impious crimes; repudiating Jehovah while he pavilions himself visibly in their midst, and worshipping a golden calf at the base of Sinai while he talks with them in thunder from its summit. So the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, and the

Romans—the most enlightened nations of antiquity—were addicted to the most revolting practices ; and all the wisdom and authority of sages, poets, orators, philosophers, and legislators, was inadequate to their reformation. Christ introduced a better religion, a purer morality, illustrated by perfect example, and enforced by superior sanctions ; established a kingdom which is destined to endure for ever, and “ purified unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” But even Christianity, with all its Divine evidence, and all its Divine influence, could not exterminate crime—no, not even where it found entertainment in palaces, and enthronement over monarchs. And the Church itself, after a few centuries, degenerated into a mass of corruption ; and her worship became a heartless formality ; and “ the dayspring from on high ” was soon succeeded by a long night of ignorance, idolatry, and superstition ; and the very earth groaned beneath its burden and its curse—a deplorable demonstration of the downward tendency of our nature—of its inherent sinfulness, and gravitation to evil. Since the Reformation, doubtless, there has been more piety in the Church, and an improving state of morals throughout Christendom ; but there is still an awful array of bigotry, superstition, intolerance, ambition, hypocrisy, perfidy, intemperance, blasphemy, sensuality, and various and enormous profligacy. How are we to account for this general corruption of manners, which hitherto no human power or expedient—not even the revelation of the Son of God—has been able to eradicate from the world ? Were there not some deep moral taint—some constitutional tendency to wrong—common to the whole species, we might expect to find among men at least as much virtue as vice, some individuals who never sinned, and some communities without a single sinful individual ; but such a phenomenon has never yet been witnessed, since Adam came weeping out of Paradise ; and all history—all human observation and experience—corroborate

the testimony of the Royal Preacher: "Yea, also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

Man's fallen progeny is very different from "man primeval." Humanity was planted in Paradise, "a noble vine, wholly a right seed." Alas! it is "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." We all inherit the disease, and are "by nature children of wrath:"—

"Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race, and taints us all."

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:" is such a heart to be trusted? The nature "is very far gone from original righteousness"—"inclined to evil, and that continually:" is such a nature to be trifled with? Watch the traitor in the camp. Mortify the members: crucify the flesh. Apply to God for aid against the foe within. Fallen humanity possesses no power of self-recovery, or self-improvement—no recuperative or conservative principle—no native germ of virtue. Without the assistance of heavenly mercy, no sinner would ever reform, no soul would ever be purified: all would grow worse and worse, and every successive generation would deteriorate in morals, till men became fiends, and earth a hell. But there is a remedy: let us learn to appreciate the grace by which it is provided and revealed. There is a fountain opened for sin: let us resort thither, and wash away our moral defilement. Christ is our appointed propitiation and perpetual advocate. One who had stood by his cross declares that his blood "cleanseth from all sin;" and another, who had been the chief of sinners, testifies that he is "able to save to the uttermost." We need something more than forgiveness, and this too is proffered—a new birth, a new creation, a spiritual quickening, a moral resurrection. It is a great change, and demands a mighty agency; but that agency

is ever ready, and only awaits your submission and cordial coöperation. It is a wondrous and mysterious transformation; but it must be wrought, or we cannot see the kingdom of God. None but "the new man" can enter the New Jerusalem. Nothing unclean shall ever pass its gates of pearl. No polluted feet shall ever tread its sapphire pavements. No sinful hand shall ever sweep its golden lyres. No evil heart shall ever thrill to its hymns of joy. The wicked could not breathe its holy air, nor bear the intense light of its purity, nor endure the sanctity of its blessed companionships. "Ye must be born again." Go, then, to the throne of grace. Go in the name of Jesus. Go with an humble boldness. Pray earnestly and importunately. Pray for a clean heart and a right spirit. God will not deny your plea. He invites your approach: he encourages your trust. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

XV.—INNATE DEPRAVITY.

“FOR the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” These are the words of God immediately after the deluge. How strongly they contrast with his former declaration, when, pausing from his task of creation, he surveyed his new production, and pronounced it “very good!” Man was his last and noblest work, made in his own image, after his likeness. Alas! how soon and how sadly he is altered! “How is the fine gold changed, and the most fine gold become dim!” How is the “right seed” “turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine!” How is the noble creature, that originally answered the idea of his Creator, converted into a hideous and disgusting monster, amid the Almighty’s handiwork! Sixteen centuries and a half are passed, and man has all this time been an accursed wanderer from Paradise; and all trace of his original abode, with his original blessedness, has been effaced from the world. Offended Heaven has just swept the earth with the besom of destruction, and only one family of eight persons have escaped the watery ruin. God, when he saw the wickedness of man, repented that he had made him; and now, for the same reason, he repents that he has destroyed him. “I will no more curse the ground for man’s sake, neither will I any more smite every thing living as I have done.” It is of no use: man’s wickedness cannot be cured by judgments: floods cannot quench it, cannot cleanse it: I might punish again and again—I might desolate the world by deluge after deluge,

and human wickedness would still reproduce itself with every successive generation: I will not repeat the experiment; "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

We regard this as a very emphatic affirmation that human nature is corrupt, and constantly tends to sin. Many proofs of this lamentable truth—proofs from Scripture and proofs from reason—were adduced in the last dissertation. We now resume the argument.

Is man's depravity innate? Is it born with him? Is it inherited, or is it acquired? Is it original with every individual in whom it prevails, or is it transmitted from sire to son through all the generations of the race? Let us examine the evidence:—

I. If human depravity is innate, it will show itself at an early period in life.

What is the fact? Does any mental quality reveal itself sooner? Not one. Scarcely does the child become capable of moral action, before it displays a propensity to moral evil. The earliest exhibition of character is ordinarily an exhibition of sinfulness. The earliest exercise of the affections is commonly an incipient dereliction. The earliest choice inclines to wrong. From the very cradle, man goes astray. Now, if that which begins to manifest itself as soon as there is an opportunity or capacity for its manifestation is justly deemed an attribute of human nature, what stronger proof could be furnished of native depravity in man?

II. If human depravity is innate, its development cannot be traced to any change in infancy.

What is the fact? Can you find its origin in the individual? Is it attributable to some previous change in his moral constitution? When did that change occur? Who witnessed it? Who can give any account of it? Human sin-

fulness is universal; and if it is attributable to a previous change in infancy, that change also must be universal. "All have sinned:" have all experienced the change supposed? Who can affirm it? What reason have we to believe it? There is no proof; and our only way of accounting for human sinfulness is by referring it to the original tendency of human nature. If a child is idiotic, and its idiocy cannot be attributed to any physical injury or disorder in infancy, we say it is naturally idiotic; and if a child exhibits sinfulness in his first unfoldings of moral character, and that sinfulness cannot be ascribed to any previous change in his moral constitution, we ought to infer that he is naturally sinful.

III. If human depravity is innate, it must necessarily be free and spontaneous in its operation.

What is the fact? Is its development the result of strenuous effort, or of powerful motive, or of urgent solicitation? Quite the contrary. Just as soon as occasion offers—just as soon as opportunity occurs—it puts forth its deadly power. Nay, it scarcely waits for occasion or opportunity. It seems impatient of restraint, and ready to burst through all obstructions. It is not the wholesome plant, that awaits the vernal sun and shower, and then needs the vigilant care and diligent culture of the husbandman; but the noxious weed, that anticipates the spring, and suddenly, before we are aware of its existence, or in spite of all our efforts to suppress its growth, attains a giant altitude and strength. It is a fountain breaking forth, and carrying ruin on its flood. Long before your children are capable of expressing their feelings in words, you see in them the exhibitions of pride, anger, revenge, selfishness, and other evil passions; and these "roots of bitterness" are constantly "springing up" at every subsequent period of life. You scarcely lop one vigorous shoot before another appears in its place. Sinfulness acts as freely and

spontaneously as any of those qualities—mental or physical—which are universally allowed to be natural to man; and ought, therefore, to be placed in the same category.

IV. If human depravity is innate, it will be found exceedingly difficult to suppress or conquer.

What is the fact? I appeal to every parent who seeks to form his children to habits of virtue and piety. You see their early propensity to sin: you exert yourselves to subdue and correct that propensity; but it constantly resists all your efforts, and breaks through every barrier; or if you succeed in restraining your children from flagrant deeds of outward wickedness, yet the evil maintains its dominion in the heart, and perverts all their faculties, and corrupts all their affections. I appeal to every man who is endeavoring to live a holy life. What is the lesson of your experience? Has it not already taught you that your sinfulness is no superficial or accidental thing; that it is rooted deeply in your very nature; that it is an inherent quality, a part of yourselves; that opposing it is opposing your own natural disposition; that getting rid of it is cutting off a right arm, or plucking out a right eye; that your most resolute resistance of it is unsuccessful; that all the strength you can array against it only makes its superior power the more apparent; and that it is altogether unconquerable, except by the correcting and renewing grace of God? And what does all this amount to, but a proof of our position, that human depravity is innate? Whence this constant struggle, this warfare between the flesh and the spirit, if your conscious sinfulness is only an acquired habit of the soul, and not an inherited quality of the nature? The fact is inexplicable upon any other principle.

V. If human depravity is innate, its development may be certainly foreseen and infallibly foretold.

What is the fact? There is an infant: he has not yet exhibited any signs of a rational and moral nature; yet we know that as soon as he becomes capable of intelligent and responsible action, he will begin to do wrong. It is no conjecture: it is not a mere probability: it is a stern moral certainty. It is not more certain that he will talk, or walk, or think, or learn, or choose—nothing indeed is more certain with regard to him—than that he will sin. We are sure that no precaution of parents, no vigilance of instructors, no influence of virtuous example, no restraints of religious education, no happy combination of circumstances, will be sufficient to avert this dreadful result. We are sure that he will begin to sin as soon as he becomes capable of sinning. But how can we so certainly foretell his future character, when as yet he exhibits no character, and is incapable of any, unless there is in his very constitution a connate propensity to evil? How can we predict his sinfulness from his humanity, unless his sinfulness proceeds from his humanity? This is the principle. There is in all men, in spite of all their theories, a deep conviction of human sinfulness—a constant practical recognition of a tendency in man to transgress the law of God. We predict the impurity of the stream from what we know of the fountain. We forebode the evil fruit from what we know of the tree. All proceed upon this principle, and there is no other explanation of the fact. That child belongs to the human race: one of the qualities of that race, hitherto universal, is sinfulness; and it is impossible to imagine that he shall be exempt from the sad inheritance. Have we not, then, as much evidence that man's sinfulness is innate, as that his faculty of speech, or of reason, or of memory, is innate?

VI. If human depravity is innate, we must expect to find it universally and constantly prevailing in unregenerate mankind.

What is the fact? Its power is seen in every individual of the human race, in all nations, and in all ages. There never has been but one exception in the world, and that was the result of a miraculous Divine interposition for the cure of the universal malady—"God manifest in the flesh." Wherever human nature exists, human depravity exists. You might as well seek for a man without social affections, or bodily appetites—you might as well look for a man without heart, or head, or lungs—as a man without evil propensities. He that saith he hath no sin is a liar, and the truth is not in him. It will not do to adduce the case of Samuel as an exception; for there is no proof that he was immaculate; and if he was, his sanctification was peculiar and miraculous. Where, then, is your specimen of sinless humanity? If such an instance had ever occurred, would it not have been recorded as a prodigy? Yet if man is not naturally sinful—if his propensity to sin is not born with him—an original quality of his constitution, how comes it to pass that, among the many millions of the race, from generation to generation, and from century to century, no individual has ever escaped contamination? Is it supposable—is it possible—that every single unit of an innumerable race, for six thousand years, would follow the fatal course of Adam, if born without a sinful bias—an inherent tendency to evil? It were a coincidence without a parallel in the history of universal being. Is not that which is universal justly deemed natural? Respiration is universal, and we say it is natural. The circulation of the blood is universal, and we say it is natural. Sensation, volition, and memory, are universal, and we say they are natural. Why may we not reason in the same manner concerning the sad phenomenon of human sinfulness? No corporeal function or mental faculty is more manifestly universal. It has prevailed everywhere, and always prevailed. Therefore it cannot arise from any peculiar cause in any particular instance. It

cannot originate in any special influence or agency, operating at any particular place, or any particular time. The cause must be commensurate with the effect. Sinful tendency must be universal, and must belong to the very nature of man. Forced by this irresistible evidence, even Byron acknowledged the "ineradicable taint of sin;" and Rousseau, in spite of his beautiful theory of the perfectibility of human nature, owned and felt, at last, that it was infected with some deadly, inveterate disease.

VII. There is a remarkable saying of our blessed Lord, which furnishes the basis of a very conclusive argument for the doctrine of innate depravity:—"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

Here is the test, given by an infallible teacher. The principle stated operates uniformly and universally. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The external act is but the expression of the internal principle. The general conduct of a man reveals the unquestionable bias of his nature. Look, then, at the furnished evidence. Always and everywhere, in all ages and all nations, man has proved himself a sinful creature. And still, throughout the human race, in every community, in every individual, in every station of life, and at every period of life, he displays the same character. And our personal experience corroborates the testimony of general observation. Who among us—even the wisest and best—can survey his own life, can examine his own heart, without the melancholy conviction of an inward evil tendency?

The evidence of human depravity from human conduct displays itself in a thousand forms, in all conceivable forms, and even in forms which, without the facts, would have been quite inconceivable, or deemed utterly impossible. Its detec-

tion requires no close and careful scrutiny : it is prominent before us ; it is palpable within us ; it is ever present, and cannot be avoided. If at any time, from any cause, we flatter ourselves that we are exempt, we shall soon be startled from the delusive dream by some unexpected development of latent evil. The smothered fire will break out into a conflagration : the slumbering viper will uncoil itself in our bosom. Fly to the desert, and imagine that in escaping from society you escape from its contagion ; but the plague-spot will soon show itself, even in your solitude, and symptom after symptom of the deadly malady will become manifest in the soul. It is no slight or partial taint ; but an inveterate gangrene, infecting the whole moral constitution. As the red uniform of the soldier makes him conspicuous through the smoke of battle, so the deep crimson of human sinfulness glares through all the pretexts and disguises of hypocrisy, and nothing serves to render it so apparent as the efforts made for its concealment. "The deceitfulness of sin" is one of its most obvious and hateful characteristics ; and "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is difficult to conceive how the evidence of human corruption from human conduct and human consciousness could be increased ; and there is nothing that renders that evidence so irresistible as the blindness which cannot see it, the perverseness which will not own it, the insensibility which does not feel it, and the pride which is not humbled by the proof.

The law of gravitation in matter is not more evident than the law of sin in man. As bodies tend to the centre, so human nature gravitates to evil. No other disease is so certain in its symptoms as the hereditary disorder of the soul. Why is it that all men sin, except as they are restrained or renewed by the grace of God ? Could this be, if there were no cause anterior to voluntary action ? To ascribe the universal fact to the mere freedom of the will were extremely

absurd. "It were," says a venerable living divine,* "to ascribe the most stupendous concurrence of perverted action, in all the adult millions of mankind, to nothing. The thing to be accounted for is the phenomenon of an entire series of universal actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple ability of choosing wrong, were to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to nothing."

Hear the great theologist and orator of Glasgow:—"Should it be found true of every man, that he is actually a sinner—should this hold true universally, with each individual of the human family—if, in every country of the world, and in every age of the world's history, all who have grown old enough to be capable of showing themselves were transgressors against the law of God—if, among all the accidents and varieties of condition to which humanity is liable, each member of humanity still betook himself to his own wayward deviations from the rule of right—then he sins purely in virtue of his being a man—there is something in the very make and mechanism of his nature which causes him to be a sinner."

From the sinful conduct of every individual man we argue the innate sinfulness of the species, just as from the ferocious conduct of every individual tiger we argue the innate ferocity of the tribe. If every man is a sinner, it must be attributed to a pervading natural tendency to sin. The uniformity of an event proves a natural tendency to that event. The uniform ascent of smoke proves its natural tendency to ascend: the uniform descent of water proves its natural tendency to descend; and so the uniform sinfulness of man proves his natural tendency to sin. But mark, it is not the bare fact that smoke ascends, or that water descends, that proves the natural tendency, but the uniformity of that fact; and so, it is not the bare fact

* Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D.

that man sins that proves the natural tendency, but the uniformity of that fact. All men, in every age, in every country, in every variety of circumstances, in spite of every conceivable moral dissuasive, in spite of all possible efforts of Heaven to restrain and reform them—all men are sinners; and the deduction is certainly legitimate, that they sin, not because they breathe a tainted atmosphere, not because they are surrounded with evil example, or plied with peculiar temptation, but because they are men—because they possess a fallen and perverted nature—because they inherit a native tendency to sin. In the most genial soil and climate, with the most diligent care and culture, the tree has constantly brought forth corrupt fruit; and the conclusion is inevitable, that its nature must be corrupt.

“If there were a piece of ground,” says Jonathan Edwards, “which abounded with briars and thorns, or some poisonous plant, and all mankind had used their endeavors for a thousand years together to suppress that evil growth, and to bring that ground, by manure and cultivation, planting and sowing, to produce better fruit, all in vain—it would still be overrun with the same noxious growth—it would not be a proof that such produce was agreeable to the nature of the soil, at all to be compared with that which is given in Divine Providence, that wickedness is a produce agreeable to the nature of the field of the world of mankind; for the means used with it have been great and wonderful, contrived by the unsearchable and boundless wisdom of God—medicines procured with infinite expense, exhibited with a vast apparatus, a marvellous succession of dispensations, introduced one after another, displaying an incomprehensible length and breadth, depth and height, of Divine wisdom, love, and power, and every perfection of the Godhead, to the eternal admiration of principalities and powers in heavenly places.”

Who can deny that the seeds of vice are seen in early

childhood, and that to restrain their growth is the principal object of moral education? And why is it that our opinion of the species generally becomes less favorable in proportion as we become better acquainted with the world? Why is it that we attribute the faith of the young and inexperienced in human goodness to their ignorance of human nature? And how will you account for the too obvious fact that there is in man a constant tendency to deterioration—that individuals almost invariably, and communities quite generally, grow worse with age? Do not these facts prove conclusively that there is no corrective principle or recuperative power in human nature, but only a constant and almost irresistible tendency to evil?

And whence the origin, necessity, and frequent inefficiency of all human laws, and of all human governments? If man did not inherit a proclivity to sin, the whole criminal code would be useless, and most civil restrictions would be needless. To what expedients, what penalties, have not legislators and rulers resorted—confiscation, disfranchisement, bodily mutilation, exile and infamy, the prison and the pillory, the gallows and the guillotine! Yet the whole ghastly array of terrors and tortures has ever been inadequate to the suppression of crime. Thefts and robberies, frauds and forgeries, murders and assassinations, with their thousand-fold accompaniment of deceit, and falsehood, and treachery, and inhumanity, are still rife throughout the earth. Such is the impetuous tendency of our fallen nature to wrong, that all the wisdom of sages and senators has not yet been able to interpose an effectual barrier to its progress.

And what is the testimony of all human religions? Why has every nation acknowledged—theoretically and practically—the necessity of sacrifice; and most nations offered human victims, as the best atonement for human wickedness? Why have they invented for themselves such monstrous objects of worship—

“Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes are rage, revenge, and lust?”

“The Normans sacrificed human victims to a divinity whose rewards were believed to be reserved for such as slew the greatest numbers in battle; and the happiness to which they aspired was intoxication in his halls, and the skulls of their slaughtered enemies were the sacred cups to be used in their eternal carousals!” I need not cite the worship of the ancient Britons, of the South Sea Islanders, of the American aborigines, of the thousand tribes of Africa, and of the more refined but not less sanguinary Asiatics. The reader is familiar with the facts, and the picture is too revolting for reproduction. How are we to account for views and rites so unworthy of God, and so inconsistent with reason? When a right conclusion was more obvious than a wrong, why was the latter always made, the former never? Is not here an unmistakable indication of the depraved moral feeling of mankind—an innate love of crime—an innate aversion to purity and goodness? Had not reason been blinded or perverted by passion, they must have discovered something of God’s real character in his works and government; for in these “the invisible things of him are clearly seen,” “so that they are without excuse.” But “their foolish hearts were darkened;” and “not liking to retain God in their knowledge,” they invented numberless false gods, to suit their own carnal preferences and propensities—gods as polluted and as profligate as themselves.

But we need not go to pagan lands for proof. Look, look at the careless and God-forgetting world around you! Whence that practical disregard of duty? Whence that general unwillingness to think of eternity? Whence those habitual efforts to stifle the voice of conscience? Why do men live on from year to year without giving themselves a moment’s serious concern about their souls and their salvation? See

that proud and careless sinner, in full health and prosperity! You must not speak to him of another world: he is above such vulgar considerations. You must not ask him to pray: he leaves that for silly enthusiasts, and for the sick and the dying. But behold a change! He writhes upon his bed. The grave yawns before him. Hell hastes to meet him. The remembrance of neglected duty torments him. The frown of an angry God affrights him. Now he sends for the minister. Now he seeks counsel from those he despised. Now he implores mercy with piteous cries and groans and tears. Ah! what regrets for the past! what solemn promises for the future! If Heaven will but spare him, how much better he will live! He recovers. What now? Alas! all is banished from his thoughts. He shuns more than ever the pious company he sought in his distress. He gives himself wholly to the world. He lives without God. He never prays. He is more thoughtless and hardened than before. Such cases are so common that they scarcely excite our wonder; but O, what proof they furnish of the inveteracy of human sinfulness! What demonstration of the unparalleled deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart!

Let me bring the argument home. I appeal to every sinner. Be honest. Do you delight in prayer? Do you delight in pious company? Is the love of God your ruling principle? Is conformity to his law the supreme aim of your life? Had you a strong desire to serve and honor him as soon as you knew him? Have you now an earnest solicitude to ascertain and perform his holy will? Is it as easy for you to do right as to do wrong? When you do wrong, is it merely through ignorance or inadvertency? When you discover your errors, do you immediately repent and thoroughly reform? Do you delight in all the revealed perfections of God—in his holiness, his justice, and his truth? Is not the

opposite of all this true of you, and was it not always with you as it is now, even from your earliest recollection?

I proceed from the bad to the good—from the worst to the best. I appeal to every saint. Did you not long walk “according to the course of this world?” What were your views of yourselves when you were once awakened, and began to seek the Lord? Did you not feel that “the carnal mind is enmity against God”—that “it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be?” Did you not feel that your heart was as “a nest of unclean birds,” and “all your righteousness as filthy rags?” Were you not obliged to struggle against self—to “mortify the deeds of the body”—to “crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts?” Did you love God before you were converted? Was not the love of God a new affection, which you had never felt before? Did you not feel yourself “a new creature”—“old things passed away,” and “all things become new?” And since that blessed change, have you not frequently felt the necessity of struggling to “keep the body under, and bring it into subjection?” Is not the whole Christian life, from its commencement, a warfare with an inward foe?

Frequently, there is no better method of proving a great truth than by exhibiting the consequences of its denial. Apply this method. If there is no innate depravity, then infants are either holy, or they are neither holy nor sinful. That they are positively holy, is a position which none will attempt to maintain. Those who deny the doctrine for which we argue, generally say that infants have no moral character—that they are neither holy nor sinful. But this, a little reflection will show to be absurd. How can a being possessed of a moral nature be totally void of moral character? How can a being who is under the government of God, be without any relation to the law of God? And what can become of such a

being after death? He cannot go to heaven, for he is not holy. He cannot go to hell, for he is not sinful. Let those who advocate the theory find a home for him, for there is none revealed in the Bible. And if there is no native depravity, then for infants regeneration is neither necessary nor possible. It is not necessary, for there is no moral impurity to be removed, no moral deficiency to be supplied. It is not possible, for regeneration is a change from sin to holiness, but infants are incapable alike of both. And what do they owe to Christ as a Redeemer? What need have they of his blood—what interest in his death? He came to save sinners—to save the lost; and if they are in no sense sinners, in no sense lost, they can derive no benefit from his advent; and if they are saved, it is not, as others, through his merit and grace; and in heaven they will never be able to join the song—“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!”

“But does not this doctrine of innate depravity involve the inconsistency of attributing moral evil to those who are incapable of moral action?” Here is, indeed, an apparent difficulty, which, however, a few words will relieve. Infants are not responsible for this native corruption, till they become capable of resisting and suppressing its operation. But as soon as they are capable of doing wrong, they are capable also of doing right. If nature inclines them to the former, grace enables them to the latter. Grace is always available, and always commensurate with their needs. They are held answerable, not for Adam’s sin, but only for their own. The personal act of Adam is no more yours, than the pulsations of Adam’s heart are yours. No appointment, covenant, or constitution, can create such a connection or identity of progenitor and progeny, as to make the latter responsible for the acts of the former, or render it possible for any person to sin before he exists. Infants are tainted with a sinful nature, but not chargeable with sinful actions. They inherit corruption,

but are incapable of crime. They are justified already, and saved when they die; but not without "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on them abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"But if sinning is natural, is it not excusable?" By no means. Nature must not be confounded with necessity. Sinning may be natural without being necessary. You may have a natural proclivity to sin, but also a gracious power to resist that proclivity. Divine aid is furnished to every man, to enable him to conquer his carnal inclinations: if he does not avail himself of it, he is guilty—he makes his corruption his crime. Manifestly, if you have power to overcome your evil propensities, and will not use it, those propensities themselves become criminal, instead of justifying the criminal actions which they occasion. Do the robber and the burglar excuse their crimes by their propensities? Do the incendiary, the assassin, and the murderer? Nothing can be excusable which God has explicitly forbidden, especially when he has given us grace to resist and conquer. "Natural corruption," says Jeremy Taylor, "can make us criminal, but cannot make us innocent."

"But may not the general prevalence of moral evil be accounted for by the influence of bad example?" This is only shifting, not solving the difficulty. How will you account for that bad example? Whose example did Cain follow in the murder of his brother? Nay, it is not even shifting the difficulty; for bad example is but another name for wickedness; and to attribute the prevalence of wickedness to the influence of bad example is to attribute it to itself. It ought also to be remembered, that children often exhibit evil dispositions before they have witnessed any evil example, or before they are susceptible of its influence. But if example alone is so potent, why has not good example as much power as bad? Why is the bad always followed—the good never? Do not the children of virtuous parents frequently become

grossly immoral? If not naturally corrupt, the good example always before their eyes should certainly exert more influence upon them than the bad example which they seldom see. In short, allowing to bad example all the power that is claimed for it—if man is pure by nature, there should be more virtue than vice in the world, which we know is not the fact; and if the soul is at birth a perfect blank, equally inclined to good and evil, or naturally inclined to neither, then virtue and vice ought to be pretty equally balanced, whereas all history and experience proclaim the contrary.

“But if there is much vice among men, is there not also much virtue?” This we do not deny. We only deny that the virtue which does exist is the natural product of the human heart. We insist that it is the gift of God—the fruit of his Holy Spirit. But what is it you call virtue? Perhaps, upon examination, it may not be virtue at all. Men may abstain from outward misconduct through motives of interest—may be deterred by the fear of disgrace or suffering; and in this case, the propriety of external deportment indicates no indwelling of virtuous principle whatever—only proves that, however deep and inveterate the corruption of their nature, it has not utterly displaced all desire of happiness and honor—has not quite excluded all considerations of reason, and prudence, and decency.

“But is not the doctrine disproved by the social affections, and the attachments of consanguinity?” No. These sentiments are amiable, but not virtuous. They contribute much to our happiness, but possess no moral quality. They may be strong in the worst of men, and comparatively feeble in the best. They are not peculiar to moral agents, but are exhibited also by the lower animals. So far from being virtuous, they have led frequently to the most atrocious crimes. They are mere animal instincts, and prove nothing as to moral character, or moral tendency.

“But I am not conscious of such depravity: I certainly possess some good qualities, and am free from some bad ones.” Very likely. But are your good qualities inherent in your nature? Are they not the product of Divine grace—seeds wafted from paradise, and watered with celestial dew? Have not the evil qualities been subdued, or kept in check, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the wholesome restraints of religious custom? Otherwise, who can tell what might have been their development? But are you quite sure that you thoroughly know yourself? Does not self-love often disguise to us our true character? Do not our own hearts deceive us? We may appear very different to others from what we appear to ourselves. “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” None but the holy can know the power of innate human sinfulness. They know, for they have felt it, and only by grace Divine become its conquerors. It was by resisting the foe they discovered his entrenchments and ascertained his strength. It was by probing and medicating the wound, they learned its depth, corruption, and dangerous character. Who are they that deny the radical evil of human nature? Generally, they that yield to every sinful propensity—they that pamper the flesh instead of crucifying it, and glide down the easy current of their own depravity without one effort to resist its power. How can they know the strength of an adversary with whom they have never wrestled—of a torrent which they have never attempted to stem? “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

But what do I? The subject is eminently practical. Away with theory! Away with argument! Away with speculation! Look back upon your past life! Look into your own heart! Ah! what reason for humiliation! What cause for shame and confusion of face! What need of renewing grace,

and of subsequent vigilance, and of prayer without ceasing, and of constant aid from on high ! Almighty God, help us in this holy warfare, and make us more than conquerors through him that hath loved us ! Amen.

XVI.—SALVATION CONDITIONAL.

AM I a sinner? Do I need a Saviour? Is there any way of salvation revealed for me? These are momentous question—worth the advent of an angel to answer—answered by the advent of the Lord of angels. There is another, not less important—that of the awakened thousands at the Pentecost—of the trembling jailer of Philippi—"What must I do to be saved?" If provision has been made for my salvation, how may I avail myself of that provision? Is there any thing for me to do? and, if so, what is it? Is my salvation already made sure? or does it depend upon my own agency? May I dismiss all care and solicitude on the subject? or must I exert myself to secure that blessed result? Finally, Is there any thing at stake—any thing to be gained or lost, in my ultimate and everlasting state, by my conduct and character in the relations which I now sustain to God and his moral government? This question we propose to answer. That we may do it thoroughly, we must first *prove that salvation is conditional*, and then *describe its conditions*.

I. The conditionality of salvation may be argued from *the government of God*.

The government of God is a fact which cannot be questioned. Government implies law: law implies sanctions: sanctions imply conditions. Further: Moral government

implies freedom of choice : freedom implies an alternative to be chosen : an alternative implies conditionality of result. Human destiny, therefore, must depend upon human conduct. Man makes his own future. It was so before the fall, and has been so ever since. Human welfare was originally conditional, and is still conditional. Redemption operates no change in this respect. What was conditional at first, is conditional still. The condition itself is altered ; but the fact of conditionality remains. The primary condition was obedience : the present condition is repentance and faith.

The conditionality of salvation may be inferred from *the analogy of nature*.

The government of God is a unit. It is the same, in its general principles and bearings, throughout the universe, and throughout eternity. We see but little, the incipient stages, of its operation ; but what is seen is the index of what is not seen. From the natural we infer the moral. Moral causes produce their results just as certainly as physical causes. The same uniformity of sequence pervades the Divine appointments in morals as in physics. We are bound to infer the intimate connection of cause and effect in the spiritual world as in the material. It is an infallible principle, therefore, that our well-being depends upon our well-doing. It is attested by constant observation and experience. Every man knows it. The reaping of to-morrow is the sowing of to-day. The destiny of manhood is determined by the character of youth. The principle is universal. It holds true in regard to knowledge—in regard to fortune—in regard to reputation. If there is any analogy—and who will doubt it?—it must hold true in regard to things spiritual and eternal. If every thing else is conditional, conditional also must be the salvation of the soul.

The conditionality of salvation may be deduced from *the doctrine of probation*.

All men are in a state of trial. The issue is an alternative, determined by the conduct of the actors. There is a test, an investigation, and an appropriate reward. This is the true idea of probation. It applies everywhere. Youth is a probation for manhood. The conduct of the former determines the character and fortunes of the latter. There is more than one possible issue, and every one must decide the alternative for himself. The same principle governs the condition and the destiny of man in all his earthly relations. See it in the child, the pupil, the subject, the soldier—in the various departments of secular business, and the relations of wedded love. Being true of this life, it must be true also of the life to come. Our conduct in time must decide our state in eternity. It is a race—it is a contest; and the reward of the competitor depends upon the success of the competition. Probation implies a definite period of limitation: that period may be longer or shorter—ten years, or three-score and ten; but whatever is achieved must come within that period. The limit is there—fixed by infallible wisdom and infinite goodness; and human effort cannot alter the Divine appointment. A failure is irretrievable and eternal.

The conditionality of salvation is manifest from *the very nature of the gospel*.

The gospel comes to us in the form of a covenant—not between the Father and the Son, but between God and man. It is called the New Covenant: the law was the old. It is called the Covenant of grace: the law was the covenant of works. “We are not under the law, but under grace.” The old covenant was broken: God mercifully provided a new. Certain benefits are proposed, pledges are given, and terms are specified. There is also a Mediator, whose office it is to see that the respective interests of the parties are properly regarded, and the stipulations of the compact faithfully executed. In this covenant God proffers salvation to man, and

binds himself to confer that inestimable benefit, on the performance by us of certain things which are distinctly stated. If we fail to comply, we forfeit the engagement : if we do our part, justice and truth demand the fulfilment of God's. There is no salvation, except within the provisions and limitations of this covenant. Various arguments and incentives are presented to engage us in our duty ; but there is no impingement on moral agency. Man is redeemed, and left to his own free choice.

“Heaven wills our happiness—allows our doom :
Invites us ardently, but not compels.”

The conditionality of salvation is explicitly taught in *the word of God*.

Read ! “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.” “He that hath the Son hath life : he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” These scriptures plainly declare the conditionality of salvation, though they do not specifically describe the conditions. Similar teachings may be found on almost every page. Think not, therefore, to be saved without effort of your own. Think not to win the prize without running the race—to receive the wages without doing the work—to enjoy the reward of victory without the conquest of the field. “Ask, and ye shall receive : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” “Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which

endureth to everlasting life." If the former is not secured without effort, so neither is the latter; and the effort is more needful, in proportion as the object is more important. And is it an easy work? "Strive"—literally, "agonize"—"to enter in at the strait gate." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." It is a struggle for the mastery—an assault upon a fortified place—a victory gained at the point of the sword. And as in the commencement of our salvation, so in all its subsequent stages—so in its consummation—it is still conditional. The apostle says to his brethren—already justified and regenerate: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." These are only a few specimen texts; but enough to settle the point beyond dispute. Salvation is conditional in all its stages—from the earliest emotions of penitence to the opening gates of paradise—from the first inception of renewing grace to the final coronation of the saint in glory. It is free, in all its degrees, for all who will accept it on the terms revealed: impossible to any who despise the specified conditions.

"Heaven but persuades: almighty man decrees:
Man is the maker of immortal fates:
Man falls by man, if finally he fall."

II. But what, specifically, are the conditions of salvation? "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." These constituted, everywhere, the burden of apostolic preaching; and they are associated in every instance of

human salvation, except in infancy, involuntary ignorance, or mental imbecility. True, sometimes repentance alone, sometimes faith alone, is mentioned as the condition; but when this is the case, the one always includes the other. They are distinct in nature, but united in operation. They cannot exist apart. They go hand in hand throughout the whole process of the soul's return to God. There can be no repentance without faith: there can be no faith without repentance. Repentance begins in faith and ends in faith: faith pervades and perfects every exercise of true repentance. Neither is complete without the other. A distinct explanation of each will show their mutual relations, and their respective importance, in the evangelical economy.

What, then, is "*repentance toward God?*"

The term is a very comprehensive one. It signifies, literally, a change of mind. In this primary sense, it includes all that is required of the sinner in order to his salvation. Saving repentance is a painful sense of sin—a sincere grief for sin—a profound shame for sin—an intense hatred of sin—an ingenuous confession of sin—a hearty renunciation of sin—a perpetual mortification of sin. It is an honest, and earnest, and thorough, and lasting, reformation of life—an enlightened and deliberate election of the better part—turning to God with weeping and supplication—laying hold on the hope set before us in the gospel—working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. It is hungering and thirsting after righteousness—groaning for freedom from the burden of guilt—struggling against the evil tendency of our nature—crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts—putting off the old man with his corrupt deeds, and putting on the new man, the spirit of Christ, the moral image of God.

True repentance is "*repentance toward God.*" It comes from God, and leads to God. It is his Spirit that opens the mental eye—that quickens the moral sense. It is only in the

light of his law that "sin becomes exceeding sinful"—only under the influence of his grace that it is felt to be "an evil thing, and bitter." When he shines in our hearts, then sin assumes a new aspect. It is perfectly odious and detestable. There is nothing on earth so hateful—nothing in hell so dreadful. No man will ever forsake sin without such a view of its intrinsic vileness; and such a view nothing but the truth and the grace of God can produce. The penitent sinner feels that his relation to God is more important than all his relations to all other beings. To have sinned against so just a moral governor, so gracious a benefactor, so benevolent a father—this is what stings him to the heart—this is what lays him prostrate in the dust—this is what makes him beat his guilty breast, and plead imploringly for mercy—this is what makes him sorrow for his evil doings, even more than he trembles for his punishment. He can scarcely think of any thing else. He could weep his life away, for having grieved his God. He does not seek to excuse or palliate his crimes. He confesses, with Job, that he is vile; and with Job, abhors himself for his vileness. He exclaims, with the contrite David, "Against thee—thee only—have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He wholly condemns himself, while he justifies the Divine law—both precept and penalty. Here is his acknowledgment:—

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

Repentance, then, is not mere compunction. It implies compunction; but it implies something more. There is no repentance without compunction; but compunction does not constitute repentance. It does not always lead to repentance. There may be powerful conviction, without any contrition. There may be an agony of remorse, without any submission

of the will. Wicked men are often awakened from their carnal slumber, and distressed with a sense of their danger, when there is no reformation, or only a slight and transient one. Their consciences are soon quieted, and their religious impressions vanish like the morning cloud, and they become more careless and insensible than before ; or else they flatter themselves that their repentance is genuine, and so remain deceived all their lives, and presume to hope for heaven, though they are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." Who ever manifested greater compunction than Saul for the persecution of David ? yet he returns again and again, with murder in his heart, to the pursuit of the innocent fugitive. The same cause impelled Judas to suicide. Were not Peter's hearers at the Pentecost "pricked in their hearts?" yet the apostle proceeded to urge upon them the duty of immediate repentance. Mere legal conviction, then, however pungent, painful, protracted, is not repentance. Sinners will all be convicted at the last day ; but not one will repent. The devil and his angels are already convicted ; but their repentance is impossible. Compunction, indeed, instead of constituting "repentance unto salvation," is an element in the eternal suffering of the lost. Yet this feeling is not to be despised. If it is not repentance, it must precede repentance—it may result in repentance. The awakened sinner is certainly nearer the kingdom of heaven than he that still slumbers in his sins.

Nor does repentance consist in slight and transient regrets, however sincere for the time, and however influential while they last in restraining from outward sin. Men may regret their crimes from a dread of their consequences, without any proper sense of their intrinsic evil and awful desert. The thief regrets, when he meets the officer. The robber regrets, when he enters the dungeon. The murderer regrets, when he ascends the scaffold. The profligate regrets, when he lies down to die. Nothing is more common than for wicked men to

regret their wickedness, when they find that punishment is approaching. But this is sorrow for the consequences—not for the sin. This is not that “tender, contrite heart,”

“Which grieves at having grieved its Lord,
And never can itself forgive.”

Regret may lead to confession; but confession does not constitute repentance. There must be confession; but confession is not enough. You may confess often—confess habitually—yet remain impenitent. Thousands confess what they never feel. The heart is not broken. The will is not subdued. There is no “godly sorrow.” Sin is acknowledged, but not renounced.

Confession may be accompanied with partial reformation; but partial reformation will prove ineffectual. Here lies a very common mistake. Men forsake their grosser sins, and think the work of repentance is done. Alas! it is not yet begun. It is useless to lop the branches: they will sprout again: the axe must be laid to the root. It is useless to dam the stream while the fountain keeps flowing: it will rise and burst the barrier. All sin must be forsaken—none retained. All must be forsaken—not merely because it deserves punishment, and exposes to the wrath of God, but because it is evil in itself, and loathsome in our sight. We must break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by turning to the Lord. These are “works meet for repentance,” without which repentance is incomplete. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”

What a miserable delusion is that which makes repentance to consist in mere penance! How terrible the responsibility of those who corrupt the word of God, and so translate it as to make the unlettered multitude believe that some slight act of self-denial, or self-mortification, appointed by the priest as a punishment for sin, is sufficient for the sinner’s absolution,

without any change of mind—any regrets for the past—any resolves for the future—any reformation of life, or return to God! Believe me, repentance is something very different from this. It is a new habit of the soul. It is the germ—the incipient development—of a new character. It is not a single act of penitence. It is a life-long sorrow for sin—a life-long hatred of sin—a life-long renunciation of sin—a life-long struggle against sin—a life-long humiliation on account of sin—a life-long prayer to God for pardoning and renewing grace. The Christian always appears before the mercy-seat in the character of a penitent. His sweetest songs are mingled with penitential tears. Even when he feels that he is pardoned and renewed, he never ceases sorrowing for his sin. The more holy he becomes, the more penitent he becomes. The more he grows in grace, the more he hates sin, and laments that he ever sinned. The more the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, the more that heart is melted into sweet ingenuous relenting for its past delinquencies. He is a mourner all his days; but he enjoys the mourner's benison. "The High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity" condescends to dwell in his humble, contrite, trembling heart. He tastes "the mystic joys of penitence;" and loves to weep, even over pardoned and purged iniquity. And when—among immortal worshippers—in the temple not made with hands—he looks upon the blessed Jesus, with the crimson marks upon his brow, and the wounds of crucifixion in his palms—O, how could he cease to grieve for the sins that spiked the sinless victim to the tree, but that those sufferings expiated those very sins, and they are drowned in the sweet ocean of redeeming love, and the painful memory is lost in the triumphant consciousness, and the sigh half breathed swells into a song to "the Lamb that was slain!"

The repentance which we have described is the indispensable condition of salvation. True, there is in it no merit to atone, no efficacy to cleanse; yet is there a manifest congru-

ity in the connection of repentance and remission of sins. Before you will be reconciled to the offender, you require in him some signs of penitence. Can God do less? Can he acquit the rebel in arms against his government? What would this be, but a license to sin—a proclamation of its impunity? O no! You must ground your weapons, and humble yourselves before him, and implore his mercy in the name of the Mediator. Repentance is the way to pardon—the gate by which you must enter the path of life.

But do not—O, do not dream that you can repent of yourselves, whenever you please, without any heavenly aid, and so put off this most important duty to some future convenient season! Ah! how many—how many—under this fatal delusion, have deferred the work till their dying day; and then have sought repentance, and repentance would not come! They could not feel the evil of sin, could not grieve for sin, and they died despairing. Beware, I beseech you, of their example! Is the Spirit of God now striving with you? You need all the help he offers. If he departs, you can do nothing. Coöperate with him while you may! Now he enlightens the mind—he softens the heart—he seeks to subdue the will—he would draw you away from your sins—he would lead you to the cross of Christ—he would engage you in the service of the Lord.

“Yield to his love’s resistless power,
And fight against your God no more!”

But faith is not less important than repentance. Repentance, indeed, is the condition of salvation only as it includes faith. Considered as exclusive of faith, it is no condition of salvation at all; but faith becomes the one sole condition, and assumes a preëminent importance.

What, then, is “*faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?*”

What is its nature? Belief and trust. It is a firm and

undoubting persuasion of the truth of what God has revealed concerning his Son, and the certainty of what he has promised for his sake.

What is its basis? The character of God. We are sure that a being of infinite moral excellence cannot deceive. We think of his glorious perfections, and confide in his gracious communications. We cannot doubt infinite goodness and eternal truth.

What is its standard? The Divine revelation. Not the Pope—not the Church—not the council—not ecclesiastical tradition; but the word of God. We must believe just what that teaches, and nothing more. If we fall short of this, our faith is defective: if we go beyond it, our faith is redundant.

What are its objects? In general, God—all that is revealed concerning his perfections and his government: man—all that is revealed concerning his condition, his redemption, and his destiny: Christ—all that is revealed concerning his person and character, his advent and ministry, his passion, resurrection, return to heaven, perpetual advocacy of our cause, and ability to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

“But must I believe in Christ as both God and man? How can I understand such a mystery? How can I credit what I cannot comprehend?”

I answer: You must believe in him as he is—as the Father has revealed him. If he is both God and man—if the Father has revealed him as both God and man—and you believe in him as only God, or as only man, or as a being who is neither God nor man—inferior to the former, superior to the latter, and different from both—then your faith is defective; nay, it is false: you do not believe in the Christ of the gospel at all, but in an imaginary being, very different from the Christ of the gospel. The gospel calls him “God,” “the true God,” and “God blessed for ever:” the gospel calls him a “man,”

“the Son of man,” and “the man Christ Jesus;” and I do not see how your faith can answer the evangelical requisition, unless it receives him, honors him, and relies upon him, in his twofold nature and relations. And why embarrass your faith with needless questions of reason? Christ is God: is there any difficulty in believing that? Christ is man: is there any difficulty in believing that? Abstractly, there is no difficulty in believing either. Then where is the difficulty? In connecting the two propositions—in uniting the two natures. But with that faith has nothing to do. Faith deals with the facts, not with their philosophy. There is no difficulty whatever, so long as you restrict yourself to the province of faith—no difficulty, till you attempt to bring reason to the aid of faith. But faith needs no such auxiliary. Either proposition, by itself, is perfectly simple—involves no mystery. Take them as they stand, and do not embarrass your faith with difficulties of your own creation.

“But must I believe in Christ as my suffering substitute—a sacrifice for my sins? Is it not enough that I believe in him as an inspired teacher, an illustrious example of virtue, and a martyr to the cause of truth and righteousness?”

I answer again: If the gospel presents him as your substitute and sacrifice, you must believe in him as such, or you do not believe in the Christ of the gospel at all. If the gospel sets him forth as nothing more than a teacher, a model, and a martyr, then believing in him as such is sufficient; but if the gospel represents him as something more, then such faith is essentially defective. Besides, believing in him as an inspired teacher, you are bound to believe in him as a substitute for sinners and a sacrifice for sin; for if ever he affirmed any thing with clearness and emphasis, it was the vicarious character of his passion and death. You must believe that he laid down his life for the sheep; that he gave his life a ransom for many; that he bore our sins in his own

body on the tree ; that he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed ; that he is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins ; that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved ; that in him all fulness dwells—all fulness of grace and truth—all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. All this you must believe, for all this is written ; and if you believe it not, you have not the faith which the gospel requires in order to your salvation.

“But why is faith made the condition of my salvation? Why not obedience in general, or some other particular virtue? What is there in faith, to entitle it to such preëminence?”

I know not that you have any right to inquire. God has so ordained, and silent submission is the sinner's duty. As salvation is his gratuitous gift, it is his unquestionable prerogative to prescribe the terms. Let us adore his sovereign wisdom and goodness, in offering so invaluable a mercy on conditions of so gracious a character. Doubtless, however, there is a peculiar fitness in faith, abstractly considered, to be the condition of salvation. A little philosophy may develop that fitness. Consider, then, that faith is the vital principle of all acceptable obedience—the living fountain of all moral virtue. If the well is opened, the streams will flow. If the mainspring is touched, the whole machinery will be put in motion. If the root thrives, the foliage, the flower, and the fruit will follow. A man's faith controls his life. A Christian faith is manifestly adapted to excite the warmest affections and prompt the mightiest efforts. Its objects are such as, if they were present and visible, must have a powerful

influence upon us; but they are present and visible—faith sees them, and grasps them—and they become as real and substantial as any of the sensible objects around us, and more influential in proportion to the perception of their vastly superior moment. Is not this the obvious meaning of the apostle, when he says—“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen?” This requisition, therefore, is the most comprehensive that God could make. In requiring faith, he requires all obedience and virtue. Faith in Christ, especially, is the appropriation of his proffered grace—a firm reliance upon his “meritorious cross and passion”—a calm recumbency of the soul upon the arm that is “mighty to save.” Thus it unites the penitent sinner to Christ—the medium of all Divine mercy; and in this fact, perhaps, more than in any other, consists the peculiar appropriateness of faith as the condition of our salvation. Faith in Christ, therefore, is enjoined as a special duty, and unbelief is rebuked as a special crime. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Men are saved or lost, not because they obey or disobey the moral law, but because they believe or disbelieve on the Son of God. Faith is required as a duty; but not as other duties. It is the great means of our union to the Light and Life of men. It has a peculiar connection with the agency of our salvation, and therefore a peculiar importance among the requisitions of the gospel.

It is a remarkable fact, that while so much is said of faith as the condition of salvation, there is no particular analysis, explanation, or description of it in the word of God. The reason of this must be, that it is either unnecessary, inexpedient, or impossible. It is evident, at least, that saving faith can be comprehended only through consciousness—can be understood only by personal experience. In general, there-

fore, it is vain to attempt an explanation of it to those who are strangers to its exercise. Can you impart, by words, a clear idea of sight, to one who never saw—of sound, to one who never heard? Faith is the act of a penitent soul: how can it be understood by the impenitent? Faith is the act of one who feels his guilt, his misery, and utter helplessness: how can it be understood by one who knows nothing personally of such painful conviction? Faith is a cordial assent to the gospel, a hearty approval of its plan, a joyful acceptance of its proffer, and an earnest reliance upon its promises: how can it be understood by one who is utterly void of spiritual perception, and incapable of appreciating in any degree the unspeakable gift of God? A soul that has never believed in Christ, can no more comprehend faith in Christ, than a being that has never loved can comprehend love, or a being that has never hoped can comprehend hope, or a being that has never sorrowed can comprehend sorrow. The utmost we can do is faintly to illustrate by comparison—to make outward and familiar things the feeble exponents of an interior and spiritual act.

Here is a man laboring and languishing under a dangerous disease. He applies to many physicians: none can help him: he is constantly growing worse. At length he hears of one possessed of wondrous skill, who has cured thousands of such cases, and never failed. He sends for him. The physician comes. With what mingled anxiety and joy does the patient look up and exclaim, "Doctor, I am at the very gate of death: I have confidence in your skill: I place myself in your hands: pity me—do pity me, and help me speedily!" This is faith.

See that poor sailor, who has fallen into the sea. Long and manfully has he buffeted the waves. They are too strong for him. He is well-nigh exhausted. See! he is sinking! He rises again, and casts around him a look of

intense despair. But there goes the life-boat. "Shipmate, lay hold of my hand: fear not: I will save you!" O, with what joyful eagerness, with what anxious confidence, he grasps the furnished help! This is faith.

Let us enter this prison. Look into this dungeon. Who is this, sitting in filth and darkness? A man who, by extravagant and vicious living, has consumed his fortune, and involved himself in debt and misery. He has lain here long, and suffered much. The case is hopeless. He cannot extricate himself, and has forfeited the friendship and the confidence of all that knew him. But stand aside for this new-comer. He is a most generous and benevolent man. The prisoner has often injured him—has ever been his inveterate enemy. But his humanity and mercy are unparalleled and invincible. His compassion for the foolish ingrate prompts him to provide relief, and seek him in his dismal cell. "I have heard of your condition," says he, "and am come to release you: I have paid your debts, and here are the receipts, with money to begin the world anew." With a broken but rejoicing heart, he accepts the offer, and is free! This is faith.

Behold, how different from that nominal faith—that historical faith—that theoretical faith—that formal assent to the gospel record—that intellectual appreciation of the gospel mercy—which is so common even among impenitent and prayerless men! Saving faith is a living faith—an acting faith—an appropriating faith—a faith which lays hold of Christ, confides in Christ, adheres to Christ, as the only and sufficient Saviour. It is reliance upon his merit, as well as credence to his truth. Repudiating all other dependences and hopes, it clings to Christ as the drowning man to the plank—as the dying man to the physician—as the culprit to a powerful advocate.

Know, then, I beseech you, wherein you are trusting! O, let it be something more than your own merits—better than your own works! Take not your own sinful and deceitful

heart for your spiritual guide! Go to the living Word! Remember that such is your innate sinfulness, and such the crimson stains of your guilt, as to need the perpetual virtue of the atonement provided for all. Remember that Christ is the propitiation for your sins through faith in his blood—that no man cometh to the Father except by faith in the Son—that by him all that believe are justified freely from all things—that whosoever believeth in him, shall live a new life, and escape the second death. “Behold the Lamb of God!” I point you to the one great sacrifice. “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” Come to Jesus, renouncing every other ground of hope—every other plea for mercy—except what his cross has furnished!

“Venture on him! venture freely!

Let no other trust intrude!

None but Jesus—none but Jesus—

Can do helpless sinners good!”

Rest not, rest not, till all your unbelief is overcome—till you feel the last lingering doubt departing—till you can say, “Lord, I believe! help thou my unbelief!”—till you hear him answer, “Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee!”

XVII.—THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS.

PROPER views of the gospel salvation are immensely important—proper views of its *method*, and proper views of its *nature*. An error in regard to either might peril our immortality. Both are clearly exhibited by that comprehensive statement of the Evangelist:—"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Let us analyze this scripture, and endeavor to develop its doctrine.

I. What, then, is *the method of salvation*? What is the furnished account of it? To whom were the privileges of sonship granted? "As many as received him." Received whom? The Messiah—the Son of God—the Saviour of the world. In what character? The character in which he came—in which he presented himself to men. They could not receive him in any other. Those who did not receive him in this, did not receive him at all. In what character, then, did he come? Read the context: "In the beginning"—before a cherub moved his wing, or a seraph tuned his lyre—"was the Word"—existed the Logos, who afterward became the

* John i. 12. 13.

Messias, the Saviour; "and the Word was with God"—essentially, ineffably, and eternally united; "and the Word was God"—not inferior, but equal—not another, but the same. "The same was in the beginning with God:" if in the beginning, he was uncreated—if uncreated, he was eternal—if eternal, he was God. "All things were made by him:" he that made all things is God; if Christ made all things, Christ is God. "And without him was not any thing made that was made"—not a spiritual essence nor a material atom: he is the sole agent of universal creation. "In him was life"—life independent, underived, original, and eternal. "And the life was the light of men"—the source alike of vitality, intelligence, and spiritual illumination—"the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—the Sun of righteousness, bringing life and immortality to light by his gospel. This is John's account of the Logos, who, he tells us, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Christ, then, is "God manifest in the flesh"—"the image of the invisible God"—that is, "the invisible God" made visible—"the unknown God" in personal revelation. The apostle calls him "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Now, to be the brightness of the glory of God, and the express image of the person of God, is, most unquestionably, to possess the attributes of God; and to possess the attributes of God is to be God. If Christ is the image and glory of God, he is eternal; and he that is eternal must be God. If Christ is the image and glory of God, he is immutable; and he that is immutable must be God. If Christ is the image and glory of God, he is omnipresent; and he that is omnipresent must be God. If Christ is the image and glory of God, he is omniscient; and he that is omniscient must be God. If Christ is the image and glory of God, he is almighty; and he that is almighty must be God. Thus the apostolic statement is

verified—"In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Thus the transcendent claims of Jesus are accredited: "I and my Father are one"—"I am in the Father, and the Father in me"—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ, then, must be received as God. If we receive him merely as man, or as angel, or as superior to both, but inferior to God, we do not receive the Christ of the gospel at all, but an imaginary being, very different from the Christ of the gospel.

But what relation does he sustain to man? What is the design of his advent? What are the benefits of his mission? Read again—the words are his own:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." How? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." But how can his sufferings save the sinner? He suffers as the sinner's substitute—a vicarious sacrifice for our sins. Hear him:—"I lay down my life for the sheep"—"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Was this what the prophets predicted of him? Read Isaiah:—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed: all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Do the apostles corroborate these representations? Hear Saint Paul:—"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"—hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Hear Saint Peter:—"Christ hath once suffered for sins—the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to

God." Christ must be received, then, as our voluntary substitute—a vicarious sacrifice for our sins—the only and all-sufficient Saviour. If we receive him merely as an inspired teacher, an example, and a martyr, we receive him not in his most important character and relations; and misapprehending the chief object of his mission, we fail to secure its benefits.

But what is it to receive Christ as a Saviour? The text explains itself. To receive Christ is to believe on his name. But what is it to believe on his name? It is cordially to embrace the record which God hath given of his Son. Is it, then, simply to credit the statement that "God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world"—that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" It is this; but it is more. To believe in Christ is so to credit his gospel as to trust in his merit and mediation alone for acceptance with God and eternal life. You may not rely upon your own morality, or religious performances, the virtue of sacraments, the intercession of saints, the intervention of priests, or any other sacrifice than that of Calvary. There is but one saving name known in the universe—but one "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"—but "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

There are in Scripture various metaphorical illustrations of faith in Christ. He is a door, and faith is entering by him. He is a way, and faith is walking in him. He is a treasure, and faith is seeking and finding him. He is a present, and faith is accepting him when offered. He is a fountain, and faith is drinking and washing. He is bread from heaven, and faith is taking and eating. He is the shepherd of the sheep, and faith is coming at his call. He is the captain of our salvation, and faith is enlisting under his banner. He is the lamb slain for our sins, and faith is sprinkling ourselves with his blood. He is our high-priest within the veil,

and faith is presenting our offering through him to the Father. He is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; and faith is flying to him for shelter, and hiding in the clefts of the rock.

Faith, then, is not a mere assent of the mind to the truth concerning Christ; but a cordial acceptance and earnest appropriation of him, in his several offices of grace. There is a nominal, historical, theoretical faith—possessed by thousands—which has no more saving power than the faith of a Mohammedan or a pagan. It is a mere intellectual exercise, and originates with themselves. Saving faith is an exercise of the heart, and is “of the operation of God.” And thus we see how faith is the condition of salvation. It is not because there is any moral value in faith, abstractly, more than in any other virtue. It is because faith unites the soul to Christ, the appointed medium of all Divine mercy. Faith is the appropriation of Christ and his salvation. A man is starving—food is offered him, he takes, and eats, and lives: it is not because there is any restoring power in the act itself, but because the act appropriates that which God has appointed for the preservation of life. A man is drowning—a plank is thrown him—he grasps it, and is saved: it is not because there is any virtue in the act abstractly, but because the act appropriates the only furnished means of deliverance. So faith has no merit, and is in itself no better than any other virtue; but it allies the soul to infinite merit, and unites it to the source of all virtue. It is receiving the Saviour of the world.

II. What follows? *Adoption*, with all its precious immunities: *regeneration*, with all its incalculable blessings. Both are mentioned in the words of the evangelist: “To them gave he power to become the sons of God:” here is *adoption*. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of

the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God :'' here is *regeneration*.

Angels are called the sons of God, because God is the author of their being, and because they bear his moral image. Adam was called the son of God, because he came immediately from his creative hand, and had no other father. Believers become sons of God by virtue of their union with the Only-Begotten of the Father. He has assumed their nature, and is not ashamed to call them brethren. Through faith we are accepted in the Beloved, and God rejoices over his adopted children.

The son of a rich man walks out into the city. He finds a poor little boy weeping at the corner. He is ragged, and filthy, and starving. His father and mother are dead, and every friend has forsaken him. He is turned out to freeze or famish in the street. The generous youth pities him, offers him aid, leads him to his home, presents him to his father, and entreats relief for the little sufferer. The father loves that son, and for his sake embraces the little unfortunate, feeds him, clothes him, protects him, calls him his, gives him his own name, educates him with his own children, and bequeathes to him an equal share in his estate.

Thus God deals with poor sinners. Christ finds us in a condition worse than orphanage—in sickness and poverty, disgrace and wretchedness extreme. We are aliens, enemies, and rebels; justly doomed, and hopelessly perishing. He undertakes our cause. He suffers to save us. God accepts him as our substitute. We embrace him, joyfully and trustingly, as our mediator. The Father, for his sake, raises us up from our low estate, makes us his sons and daughters, brings us into his family, refreshes us with the new wine of the kingdom, grants us access at all times to his presence, and we become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. "As

many as received him, to them gave he power"—the right, the privilege—"to become the sons of God."

Is this all? O, no! We are *regenerated*, as well as *adopted*. Believers are "born" to their lofty privilege. Whence? Of human origin? By human descent? Is it from Abraham? Is it from Jacob? Would this constitute them the sons of God? O, no: it is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Hear Christ to Nicodemus:—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What does this mean? It is a mystery. The carnal mind cannot comprehend it. Human philosophy cannot trace the process. No logic can analyze it: no rhetoric can describe it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." You see the effects: you feel the power; but the change is inexplicable, because it is Divine. There is an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. To awaken, enlighten, impel to duty, and attract to the cross of Christ, he uses the word, and other external means; but the act of regeneration is a direct effort of the Divine power upon the soul. The Author of the first creation is also the Author of the second creation. He who made the world renews the heart. "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." But what, precisely, is the nature of this spiritual renovation?

Is the substance of the soul changed? No. That would destroy its identity, and the man would become another being.

Is there any new faculty given? No. That would render its subject a different species, and the regenerate man would be something more than man.

Is there any new strength imparted? No. The same constitutional vigor or feebleness, brilliancy or dulness, remains.

The mind is just what it was before ; but it acts more freely, and more correctly ; because it is delivered from the domination of evil motives, and the stern embargo which the heart laid on the intellect is removed.

Is there any new revelation of truth ? No. It is the same, though it shines with a new radiance. The darkness of unbelief and prejudice are swept away. The mental vision is cleared. The law of God is seen in its holy and spiritual character. The gospel of Christ is seen in its moral beauty and perfection. The doctrine of atonement and mediation becomes the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. The Saviour is “the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely”—“of God, made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Does this imply a freedom from temptation, and from all liability to sin ? By no means. Sinful thoughts may return, and sinful passions may awake again ; and the world and Satan will ply the regenerate soul with all the apparatus of seduction and ruin ; and many a root of bitterness, that you deemed quite destroyed, will probably spring up and trouble you, and you will find that regeneration, instead of being a discharge from warfare, is only the commencement of the campaign. Is it not a regenerate man that Paul exhorts to “fight the good fight of faith ?” and is it not of regenerate souls he says—“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers—against wicked spirits in high places—the rulers of the darkness of this world ?”

What, then, is regeneration ? It is a change of heart—a renewal and purification of the moral affections. It is a new direction given to the thoughts and hopes and aims of life. It is a new vitality infused into the soul—a new creation in the image of God. The likeness is real, though the copy is greatly inferior to the original. We are “made partakers,” saith the apostle, “of his holiness”—“partakers of the Divine

nature." More particularly, regeneration is a change in a man's moral taste, or relish, or principle of action—a change in his moral disposition, in his governing inclination, or propensity. This is the basis of character; and where this is changed, a thorough change of character must follow. From the new heart results a new life. New objects are chosen, and new habits are formed. The fountain is cleansed, and sends out pure streams. A spiritual germ is implanted, which brings forth the fruits of righteousness. To all the affections a new direction is given, and to all the faculties a new exercise. "Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." What was formerly loved is now hated; and what was formerly hated is now loved. God is loved—God in all his attributes—his holiness and justice, as well as his benevolence and mercy. His law is loved, his house, his service, and his children. The regenerate soul, once alienated from God, now finds it good to draw near to him; and exclaims with the Psalmist—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." His motives, desires, affections, and tendencies, are all holy and heavenward, and all holy things become beautiful, and all holy beings attractive, and all holy exercises delightful; and the heavens seem to glow with a diviner radiance, and the earth to bloom with a diviner loveliness, and all vocal nature to unite in hymns of worship.

Thus, by a twofold mercy, believers in Christ "become the sons of God:" first, by *adoption*; and secondly, by *regeneration*: first, by a gracious change in their *condition*; and secondly, by a gracious change in their *character*. What is the result? God loves them, delights in them, rejoices over them, and makes them partakers of his joy. But is there any thing peculiar in this? Does not God love all his creatures alike? True, he "is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." There is not an insect that flutters

in the breeze, nor a reptile that crawls in the dust, nor a flower that blooms, nor a leaf that falls, for which he does not care. He hears the cry of the raven, and hunts the prey for the lion. He makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, alike upon the evil and the good. All share his solicitude, and enjoy his bounty. But there is a vast difference. His love for sinners is a love of kindness and compassion : his love of saints is a love of approval and complacency. In the one case, it is the father pitying the alien and the outcast of his children ; in the other, the same father, rejoicing over his obedient and happy family. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." There is something peculiar in his regard for his people. It is the love of his own image in their souls. He keeps them as the apple of his eye. He guards them as the shepherd guards his flock. He stations his angels around them. He liberally supplies their needs. He turns evil into good for them. He makes the malice and persecution of their enemies the means of improving their virtues and insuring their salvation. Under the supervision of his gracious providence, every affliction becomes a blessing. Toil is the preparative for rest ; suffering is the pledge of joy ; poverty is the earnest of an imperishable inheritance ; and the depression of their present state is to be succeeded by an eternal exaltation in the kingdom of heaven !

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." How contemptible the glory of the greatest monarch that ever lived, compared with the privilege and dignity of the meanest member of this heavenly family ! O, what a Father—how rich, how wise, how kind, how bountiful—has the humblest believer in Jesus ! What a fraternity of blessed souls—some unfallen, and some redeemed—await him in his everlasting home ! What honors are there—palms, crowns, thrones, and

kingdoms such as earthly princes never ruled! What knowledge of God, and his glorious empire—of Christ, and his redeeming love! What personal beauty, what intellectual perfection, what unmingled blessedness of being! “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.” And all the faculties of mind and body shall be attuned to their noblest employments and sublimest joys; and new sources of pleasure shall be springing up, inexhaustible and everlasting; and the happy beings shall see God, and talk with Jesus, and sit with patriarchs and prophets, and walk with apostles and martyrs, and soar in light with the cherubim, and sing of love with the seraphim, and never tire of their occupation, nor weary of their home!

And now, who of my readers are sons of God? The test is before you. You believe “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;” but do you receive him as your personal Saviour? Is your faith merely in the head, or is it also in the heart? Is it merely an intellectual assent to the truth, or is it also a cordial acquiescence of the affections, and a hearty concurrence of the will? Many profess religion, participate in the externals of devotion, contribute liberally to every good work of the Church, and seem to feel a deep interest in all that concerns her welfare; but their Christianity is far from being a matter of personal experience—a renovation of the inner man. Is it possible that these are trusting in their own righteousness, and destitute of saving faith? Is it possible that all their splendid virtues are less than “the fruit of the Spirit?” Dreadful doubt! It hangs like a northern blast over the blossoms of spring! The question, my friends, lies between yourselves and God. If you are sons, you have “the Spirit of adoption”—you are “led by the Spirit.” Produce, now, your titles! What evidence have you of your sonship? What proof can you

furnish to the world? Have you the indwelling testimony of the Spirit? Do you follow the guidance of the Spirit? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith!" And may God mercifully aid you in the process, and crown it with a happy issue!

XVIII.—THE REJECTED REDEEMER.

PROPHECY is history forestalled. The spirit of the seer, like the eye of God, ranges through time, and beholds the end from the beginning. What the evangelical annalist records, the evangelical prophet anticipates. John says: "He was in the world, and the world knew him not: he came unto his own, and his own received him not."* But more than seven hundred years before, Isaiah had said—as if the future were the present—as if the fact were actually before his eyes—as if the Messiah had already appeared, and the Jews had denied him, and the Romans had crucified him, and the great mass of human sinners had disallowed his claims and spurned his offers—"He is despised and rejected of men."†

But how incredible seems this announcement! For ages he has been the desire of nations, and the expectation of the chosen people. For ages holy men have been foretelling his advent, portraying his character, describing his ministry and his miracles, singing the prelude of his coronation anthem, and chanting the triumphs of his everlasting kingdom. Now he comes, as he was predicted—of the seed of Abraham, as predicted—of the house of David, as predicted—of a virgin mother, as predicted—in the town of Bethlehem, as predicted—with all the circumstances which were to

* John i. 10, 11.

† Isa. liii. 3.

attend his coming. He comes, and the voice of heavenly minstrelsy awakes the sweet echoes of the Judean hills, and a meteor guides the magi to the new-born Star of Jacob. He comes, and "the Spirit of the Highest" descends upon him like a dove, and a voice from out the sky startles the ear of thousands with the announcement—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" He comes, and his life is all beauty, innocence, holiness, benevolence, without a precedent and without a parallel; and the opened eyes of the blind, and the quickened ears of the deaf, and the loosened tongues of the dumb, and halting feet strengthened, and withered hands restored, and leprosy cleansed, and lunacy cured, and fevers rebuked, and demons banished from the living breast, and the dead starting to life from the bed, the bier, the tomb, all proclaim him "the Son of God with power." He calls disciples, and they are paragons of every virtue. He ordains apostles, and a thousand miracles attest their mission. He sends them to preach the gospel, and none of their enemies are able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which they speak. A few poor, illiterate fishermen, husbandmen, vine-dressers, tent-makers, tax-gatherers—men without any natural advantages or extraneous facilities—go forth to proclaim him the Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the Gentiles; and lo! their discourses transcend the sacred lore of the Sanhedrim, and baffle the philosophy of the Acropolis, and strike dumb the eloquence of the forum; and thus prove their Divine endowment, and authenticate their claim to the ear and the heart of the world!

But with all this array of evidence—O, strangest of all historic anomalies!—men close their eyes, avert their ears, harden their hearts, and deny the Lord that bought them. Heaven pouring its music over his manger, hell yielding reluctant testimony to his power, and mute nature articulating her attestation of his Divinity, he is repudiated, persecuted,

crucified. And though the frowning sky, the quaking earth, the cleaving rocks, the rending veil, and the waking to second life of "many of the saints that slept," proclaim to his murderers that they have killed the Prince of life, and force them to smite their breasts and say—"Truly, this man was the Son of God!" and though the resurrection angels, and the affrighted legionary guard, and the whole body of the disciples, declare that he is alive again; and though the disciples adhere to their testimony unto the death, and spread the tidings everywhere, amid privations and peril, "the Lord also working with them, and confirming the word with signs following;" and though all that could be devised in heaven is done on earth to accredit the claims of Christianity, and commend its offers to the affections and hopes of mankind; yet—hear it, hear it, O guilty world! hear it, hear it, O blood-redeemed immortals! hear it, and wonder, and weep, ye ingrates for whom he descended, and suffered, and died! let it ring along the sapphire walls of heaven, and penetrate the profoundest gloom of hell!—he who made the world, who loved the world, who pitied our helpless woe, and resigned the throne of the universe, and came to seek and to save that which was lost, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree, being made a curse for us—he—that embodiment of all goodness, that impersonation of all compassion, that incarnate miracle of love divine—"He is despised and rejected of men!"

We are apt to imagine that, if we had lived eighteen hundred years ago, and seen what the Jews then saw, and heard what the Gentiles then heard, we should have acted very differently—should have welcomed the world's Redeemer, and rejoiced in his redeeming love. Alas! we know not our own hearts. Look around you! look within you! The same blindness of mind, perverseness of will, selfishness of motive, obduracy of feeling, and inveteracy of unbelief, yet

characterize our fallen nature ; and still—no less than when he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth—no less than when his gospel was preached by apostolic ministers, and demonstrated by apostolic miracles—“He is despised and rejected of men.”

But let us inquire what there was—first in the case of *the Jews*, and then in the case of *the Gentiles*—to prevent their reception of the gospel ; and perhaps we shall cease to wonder, though we cannot justify.

I. Among the causes which conspired to the rejection of Jesus by THE JEWS, the first place must undoubtedly be given to *their enormous wickedness*. Who knows not the power of evil passions to blind the mind, and of evil practices to harden the heart ? Who knows not that men who love sin are ready to reject the most evident truths and embrace the most absurd opinions ? Who knows not that vice naturally tends to enfeeble the understanding and infatuate the judgment in relation to matters moral and religious ? Christ calls the Jews “an evil and adulterous generation.” He brands their leaders with hypocrisy, and accuses them of all manner of wickedness. You could scarcely expect a people to be better than their teachers. Josephus informs us of enormous villanies practiced by some of them, of which perhaps no pagan nation was ever guilty. He says there never was a race of men who so abounded in iniquity ; and deems them worse even than the men of Sodom, or the generation destroyed by the deluge. No wonder, then, that they rejected the teaching of Jesus. He who is totally corrupt in heart and understanding is incapable of discerning between truth and error—has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, that which relates to his own duty, or rebukes his own crimes ; though a thousand prophecies fulfilled, and a thousand miracles performed, attest the Divine character and mission of the teacher.

The Jews stumbled at *the origin of our Saviour*. "We know this man, whence he is," said they; "but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." They knew well enough that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem; but they had a traditionary belief that he would hide himself for some time from the people, and afterwards reappear suddenly, no man knowing whence he came. But Jesus was well known to have lived about thirty years in Galilee, and therefore they supposed he could not be the Messiah. They thought him to have been born there, and this was an insuperable barrier to his Messianic claims. "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" said they: "Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." If the statement were true, the deduction was not legitimate. The fact that no prophet had yet arisen out of Galilee was no argument against the possibility of such an occurrence. But it was not true. Jonah and Nahum were certainly Galileans, perhaps Malachi also. In his own country, and among his own acquaintances, he met with a similar prejudice. They knew his person, his education, his manner of life, his laborious occupation, the poverty of his family, and the obscurity of his condition; and having long viewed him only as an equal, some of them as an inferior, they could not regard him now with the veneration due to a prophet; and though they were astonished at his wisdom and his mighty works, and wondered whence he derived his transcendent gifts, they could not receive him as the Messiah. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" said they. "Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence, then, hath this man these things? And they were offended at him."

The manner of his advent was offensive to the national pride. The Messiah whom they expected was to come as a prince and a conqueror. He was to save his people, subdue

their enemies, and reign gloriously over a subject world. They confounded the predictions of his first and his second advents. That his first dominion on earth was to be a spiritual reign in the hearts of his people, and that the manifestation of his glorious personal sovereignty was to be reserved for his second coming, were things of which they had never dreamed; and when he came in poverty, humility, and suffering, they would not acknowledge him; and his persecution and crucifixion confirmed their unbelief. But if some of the prophecies seemed to be unfulfilled in him, the fulfilment of so many others was sufficient to authenticate his claims, and the miracles which he wrought furnished abundant proof of his Divine commission. With a little more attention to the prophets, they would have found that he who was to save the Jews, and subdue the Gentiles, and wield the sceptre of universal empire, was also to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—to "make his soul a sacrifice for sin," and be "cut off out of the land of the living;" and with a little more candor, and a little more faith, they might have seen in his subsequent resurrection, and his return to heaven, and the outpouring of his Spirit, and the triumphs of Christianity, an irresistible attestation to his Divinity.

His doctrines were unpopular. His teachings discredited their traditions, rebuked their customs, and belied their hopes. He taught a spiritual religion: they had made theirs a carnal. He exalted the moral law: they preferred the ceremonial. He required purity of heart: they gloried in outward cleansings. He spoke of the Mosaic ritual as a temporary institution: they regarded it as everlasting. He enjoined humility and charity: they rejoiced in their national superiority, and looked upon the Gentiles as dogs. He condemned evil thoughts, as well as sinful actions: they said there was no harm in bad designs, unless they were put into execution. He promised eternal happiness to the good, and threatened the

bad with eternal misery, without distinction of nation : they believed that no Israelite could be lost, except through apostasy, idolatry, or some other enormous crime. He gave them no hope of restoration to their former independence, prosperity, and power : they cherished an ardent love of liberty, and were looking for such a deliverance and elevation as the nation had never known. He denounced their common practice of divorce for slight causes, and of subsequent marriage, as no better than adultery : they had long been addicted to such abuses, and justified by their traditions what they could not justify by the law of Moses. He called his disciples to a life of suffering, and required of them what must have involved, in the case of every Jew, the sacrifice of all that was dear to him on earth, and made his nearest relations his bitterest enemies ; and surely, it needed no small virtue and resolution to forsake father and mother, brother and sister, wife and child, house and lands, to become the follower of a homeless and almost friendless master. In short, the Jews thought that the precepts of Jesus were too strict, and that no man could meet the requisitions of his severe morality ; therefore they despised him as a teacher, and rejected him as a leader.

He was not in favor with the great. The priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees, did not believe on him. This deterred the common people. They reasoned thus : “ Those who have made religion the study of their lives are certainly better judges in a religious controversy than we : they do not acknowledge this man as the Messiah ; why should we ? ” It was bad logic. Notwithstanding their superior advantages, the priests, scribes, and Pharisees were, of all men, the least reliable judges in the case. They were exceedingly corrupt. They were blind leaders of the blind. They put light for darkness, and darkness for light. They called good evil, and evil good. By their false maxims and superstitious customs, they shut up the kingdom of heaven ; and neither entered

themselves, nor suffered others to enter. If they were otherwise qualified for deciding on the validity or invalidity of our Saviour's claims, yet were they too far committed on the wrong side to render an impartial verdict. And who needed their opinion? The matter was perfectly plain. Could not every man determine for himself whether Jesus were the Messiah? What was the evidence to be examined? The simple testimony of facts, which they had seen with their own eyes. Of these, the most unskilled and illiterate mind in Jerusalem was as good a judge as the greatest logician of the Sanhedrim, or the most learned doctor of the law. Here are the eyes of a blind man opened; there is a paralytic instantly restored. Here is a leper cleansed; there is a corpse revived. Did not every Jew know that no man could do such miracles except God were with him, and that God would never empower an impostor to perform them in his name? Yet they despised and rejected Jesus because he was despised and rejected by the great men of the nation; and in doing so, like many in our own day who prefer authority to reason, they renounced their own judgment, and proclaimed themselves fools.

Besides these common prejudices of the people, *the priests, scribes, and Pharisees* had *other* and *peculiar* motives for rejecting Christ. He had openly scorned their whitewash virtue. He had poured contempt on their affected sanctity. He condescended to speak and to eat with sinners. He wrought works of charity and mercy on the Sabbath. How could such a man be the Messiah? His piety had not in it enough of austerity to suit them. It did not comport with their views of the dignity which he assumed. Therefore, when he claimed Divine honors, they were greatly shocked, and accused him of blasphemy. And had he not often reproved them for their hypocrisy and corruption, their covetousness and extortion, their bigotry and uncharitableness,

their supercilious contempt of others, their vain distinctions in the law, their zeal for the traditions of the elders, and their scrupulous regard for the utmost trivialities of religious custom, while they neglected the weightier matters of morality and piety? Had he not publicly denounced them as "blind guides"—"serpents"—a "generation of vipers?" On these accounts they were highly incensed against him; and in the judgment which they formed of him, were governed by their passions more than their reason. And what was prompted by anger and resentment was seconded by self-interest and worldly policy. They had seen his miracles, and the disposition of the multitude on several occasions to install him king. If he had been a deceiver, or an ambitious man, he might easily have enthroned himself in Jerusalem, and incited the Jews to rise against the Romans, and try to throw off their galling yoke. But what had the Jewish rulers to expect from such a measure? In any event, nothing but disgrace and ruin. Unsuccessful, Rome would visit the attempt with a terrible vengeance—successful, the establishment of his authority would be the overthrow of theirs. They knew his opinion of them—his dislike of their vices; and they dreaded his advancement to power. Supposing that the Messiah must be a king, they opposed him, persecuted him, and sought to destroy him. They succeeded in their endeavors. They "stirred up the people," intimidated the governor, procured the condemnation of their victim, and thought that by his crucifixion they had averted what they feared. But he arose again, and his disciples appeared openly at Jerusalem, proclaiming the fact, and authenticating the proclamation by miracles. Could the Jewish authorities resist such evidence? They did resist. Their worst apprehensions were awakened. They had been the chief agents in procuring the crucifixion of Jesus. What now, if the apostles were allowed to continue preaching his Messiahship? What if their doctrine were

received, and multitudes converted to their faith? What would become of *their* authority? What had *they* to apprehend, but the resentment of the masses? The apostles must be stopped, or *they* are ruined. They are prohibited; but they continue preaching and performing miracles. They are called again before the council. "Did we not straitly charge you," saith the high-priest, "that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Fresh miracles are performed to convince them. But when reason is controlled by prejudice and passion, all evidence is vain, and all demonstration is powerless. They allege that these wonderful works are mere impositions, or the productions of evil spirits. They persecute the apostles, everywhere, and wreak their vengeance upon their converts. They arraign them before the Roman magistrates; accusing them of sedition, and all sorts of crimes; and perjuring themselves to procure the punishment of their inoffensive victims. They beat them in their synagogues—they imprison them—they banish them—they stone them. They take pains to send accusers from Jerusalem into all countries of their sojourn, to charge them with atheism, and make them everywhere as odious as possible. Thus the Master is persecuted in his disciples. Thus Jesus is "despised and rejected" by *the Jews*.

II. Turn we now to the case of THE GENTILES.

They had many prejudices in common with the Jews, and some peculiar to themselves, which prevented them from receiving Christ as their Redeemer. Among the former may be mentioned their corrupt morals, the influence of education, the purity of the gospel precepts, the trials incident to a profession of Christianity, the temporal advantages to be gained by rejecting and opposing it, the poor appearance which Jesus made in the world, the unpopularity of his doctrines, his

rejection by the Jewish rulers, his life of suffering, his ignominious death, and the tribulations of his followers. These facts had the same effects upon the Gentiles as upon the Jews. But there were other causes for their rejecting the Son of God, which did not operate in the same manner upon the Jewish mind.

The Jews knew something of the doctrine of *atonement for sin by vicarious sacrifice*. It was revealed to them in their law, and kept continually before them in the daily offerings; so that when the true nature of our Lord's sufferings and death was explained to them by the apostles, they had no difficulty in comprehending the theory; and but for the prejudices we have described, might have embraced him as their Saviour. With the Gentiles the case was different. If they had any notion of this doctrine, it was obscure and imperfect. They could not conceive how one who seemed hated and abandoned of God should restore men to the favor of God—how his sufferings could avail for the salvation of sinners. It was difficult to make them understand how he could be delivered for their offences and raised for their justification. It was exceedingly difficult to make them believe that a crucified person could possess any power to save. The doctrine, indeed, was a "stumbling-block" to the Jews; but to the Gentiles it was "foolishness." The whole system and apparatus of Christianity appeared to them utterly contemptible. If Christ had come with royal pomp and martial array—if he had proposed to save mankind by his wisdom, authority, or military prowess—they would have been ready by the thousand to join his standard; but that he should propose to redeem the world by submitting to poverty and contempt, by avoiding all earthly honors, by enduring the greatest indignities, and dying upon the malefactor's cross—that he should propose to spread a new religion through all nations by sending out a few obscure and illiterate men, with no art but that of plainly speaking

the truth, and no arms but those of meekness and love—they deemed the utmost stupidity, insanity, infatuation of folly. How could they acknowledge such a leader? How could they embrace such a religion? How could they become the disciples of Jesus the carpenter—Jesus the crucified; or submit to the teaching of Simon the fisherman, or Matthew the publican—men so much inferior in learning to their own philosophers, and in eloquence to their own orators?

The religion of the Jews, properly understood, only *prepared the way* for Christianity; but the religions of the Gentiles were at all points *opposed* to its teachings. They believed in many gods, with conflicting interests and inclinations—capricious, revengeful, swayed by evil passions, and all concerned in the government of the world. They supposed that the gods were far from desiring that all men should embrace the same doctrines, or practice the same rites; but were pleased with the variety of faith and worship which obtained in different countries; and required nothing more than temples, and altars, and statues, and rich presents, and costly sacrifices, and consecrated personages, and hymns sung in their praise, and festivals kept to their honor; and this outward respect they called religion, and observed it chiefly for political ends, and thought it their duty to preserve inviolate as they received it from their ancestors; while virtue was something totally different, and not deemed necessary to please the gods; and many of their sacred solemnities were quite incompatible with true virtue, consisting in sanguinary cruelties, and shameless impurities, and deeds too vile to name. Wedded to such a system, what availed with them the reasoning of Paul, or the declamation of Apollos?

Besides, Christianity appeared to them to be a *novel* system, whereas paganism was venerable from its *antiquity*. They did not know that the principles of the gospel were as old as the world. How could they renounce their own reli-

gions, received from their ancestors, and cherished for ages, for one which they supposed to be but the birth of yesterday?

Another objection they found in the *plainness* of the evangelical record, and the *simplicity* of the apostolical preaching. The literary taste of the age was a bad one. The purity and dignity of the Augustan period had passed away. Philosophy had degenerated into conceit, and eloquence had become inflated and bombastic. The truth was despised because it was unadorned. Christianity was rejected because it claimed attention from its own merits, without the aid of meretricious ornament. The people demanded more of method and argumentation—more of learning and philosophy—more of fancy and vivacity—more of the elegant and classical—than they found in the discourses and writings of the first Christian teachers.

They complained of the gospel, also, that it was *unphilosophical* and *unreasonable*; demanding the unqualified submission of the intellect, on the bare authority of its originator and publishers, without proper investigation or sufficient evidence. If the allegation had been true, and Christianity claimed to be only a human system, the objection would have been just, and unbelief would have been defensible. Christianity, however, does not pretend to be a mere human system, but an authoritative revelation from God; yet do its doctrines and precepts in many instances appeal to man's loftiest faculty of reason, while heaven and earth and hell are laid under tribute for its demonstration. But such was the blindness of the Gentiles, that they could not see the rising sun, and the miracles which authenticated the gospel were blasphemously ascribed to magical art or infernal agency.

Again, Christianity required of its disciples *an open avowal of their faith*. This to the Gentiles seemed exceedingly unreasonable. They thought it of little consequence what reli-

gion a man professed, provided he led a proper life; and held that the gods chose to be worshipped in various ways, according to the various opinions of men; and that every one ought, for the sake of the public peace and tranquillity, to conform to the religion established by the laws of his country. This seemed very liberal in comparison with Christianity, which rejected all gods but one, and condemned all other religions as impious and blasphemous, and required in its disciples an unqualified repudiation of idolatry, and an open acknowledgment of their adherence to this exclusive system.

They had no proper notion of *the authority of conscience* in matters of religion, and could not understand the refusal of the Christians to comply with the religious requisitions of the countries in which they chanced to sojourn. They counted them inexcusably obstinate and perverse, when they would not sacrifice to idols; and no better than fools and madmen, when they would rather die than submit to the command of the magistrate.

If Christianity succeeded, of course, it must put an end to the *prevalent superstitions of paganism*. But there were thousands—priests and sorcerers, artists and architects—who lived by these superstitions. Could they receive—could they even tolerate—a system which was likely to ruin their occupations and their prospects—to cut off their gains, and deprive them of a support? It was not to be thought of. The matter must be stopped, or they must suffer. Oracles are consulted, and the response is always a denunciation of Christianity, encouraging the rejection of its doctrines, and prompting the persecution of its teachers and its converts.

The most powerful opposition to the gospel came from *princes and emperors*. They were superstitious and tyrannical, capricious and cruel; and thousands of their subjects were deterred by fear from embracing “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Some of them were notorious for all kinds of wicked-

ness. They assumed Divine honors, indulged in blasphemy and debauchery, and could tolerate nothing that opposed their enormous vices. Under some of these—as Nero and Diocletian—the followers of Christ were treated with the utmost inhumanity. Sometimes they were opposed and persecuted even by emperors of less exceptionable morals—as Trajan, Titus Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. They had their prejudices and their superstitions. They were exceedingly tenacious of the Roman religion. Policy urged them to discountenance the introduction of a new system, which might possibly prove injurious to the state. Christianity was misrepresented: they formed a wrong estimate of it, and felt bound to oppose it as a monstrous and most dangerous thing.

But the multitude among the Gentiles generally exhibited *great indifference to religion*. Their thoughts were all given to other matters. Riches and power, luxury and pleasure, philosophy and letters, poetry and eloquence, the fame of genius and the renown of arms, occupied all their time and care. Many of them were well convinced that the religions of the pagan world were nothing but tissues of fable and forgery, inconsistency and absurdity; and they concluded that Christianity was no better, and deserved not even an examination. Therefore they took no pains to inquire into its claims, or ascertain its quality. Thus Gallio, when the Jews brought Paul before him, refused them a hearing; for he “cared for none of these things.” For the same reason, probably, Festus refused to hear the apostle, and told him that he was beside himself. And Paul’s auditors at Athens, though they were men of learning and understanding, did not care to be informed on such a subject. They had more pride than knowledge, and more vanity than good sense. Therefore the claims of Christianity were disregarded, and its inspired advocate was set at naught.

But the great cause for the contempt cast upon the gospel,

the different nations and successive ages of the world—all the individual suffering, and all the social calamities, and all the national woes—and tell me how the Supreme Goodness can inflict such a frightful amount of misery upon his creatures, or even bear to see it endured. Why did he ever create a world which he foresaw would reek with blood and ring with wailing? Yet these things exist, and exist by his appointment or permission, and therefore must be consistent with the goodness of his nature and the benevolence of his government. And if now, why not hereafter? If for six thousand years, why not for ever? What God has done furnishes a presumption of what he will do; and as the guilty subjects of his empire have always suffered, it is probable that they always will.

Perhaps the reason why you cannot reconcile the eternal torments of the wicked with the infinite goodness of God is because you do not understand the principles of the Divine administration—cannot comprehend its method, and the relations and dependences of its several parts. You know that God is good; but you see also that his goodness consists with human suffering. You know that he loves his creatures; but you see also that his love does not prevent his punishing the guilty. And for aught you can tell, the eternal punishment of the guilty may be necessary to the greatest glory of his goodness, and the general welfare of his creatures; and his regard for the happiness of the universe may be the grand motive for turning the wicked into hell, with all the nations that forget God. If it would contribute to the order and interest of moral being in general, so as to result on the whole in blessing to the creation of God, that benevolence which aims at the greatest good of the greatest number, and would diffuse blessedness over all the provinces of its illimitable empire, positively requires that “the soul that sinneth shall die.” Could you comprehend all the glorious attributes of God; all

the intrinsic malignity and vileness of sin; all the happiness which it aims and tends to destroy; all the mischief which, uncontrolled, it would operate among intelligent beings; all the influence of punishment, in restraining its rage, and checking its diffusion; all the interest which God must feel in millions on millions of worlds, which he has made, and still sustains and rules; all his care to guard the purity and promote the blessedness of their teeming myriads of rational and sinless beings; and how justice and holiness blend with benevolence in his administration; how every attribute harmonizes with every other in seeking the greatest good of his immortal subjects; in short, how infinite perfection must administer the affairs of an empire which is unlimited and everlasting—then, perhaps, you might see how even the goodness of God necessitates the eternal misery of the wicked.

“But is not God our father? and does it consist with the character of a father to torture his children for ever?”

If God is a father, he is not like earthly fathers. Ever since the beginning of the world, he has been doing what no human father could do. What father would drown his children, as God did the former world? What father would burn his children, as God did the population of the plain? What father would bury his children alive, as God did Korah and his insurgent crew? What father would torment his children with manifold pain and anguish, such as man has suffered ever since he came forth of the gates of Paradise? Now, these inflictions either consist with the character of God as a father, or they do not. If not, then God is not our father in the sense intended in the objection. If they do, then God, though a father, can afflict his human children for their disobedience. And if for a lifetime, why not for ever? If for two hundred generations, why not to all eternity?

God was the father of Adam. Did that relation prevent Adam from sinning and suffering? If not, why should it

unconditionally restore the whole race to holiness and happiness, after having maintained toward their Heavenly Father for so many ages an attitude of hostility and defiance? God was the father of man as much before he ever sinned and suffered as he has been since; and if that relation did not save him from sin and suffering, and does not save him now, what reason have you to expect such a result hereafter? If his parental character permits your misery—if his parental hand inflicts misery upon you in this world, why not in that which is to come? Will your misery be less consistent with his relation to you in eternity than it is in time?

The truth is this: All men are not, in a spiritual sense, the children of God. Sinners become the children of God by adoption. Adoption is taking another person's child, and making it one's own. You cannot adopt your own child. If all are God's children, he can never adopt any. Those whom he adopts were not his children before. Men are not by nature the children of God, but "the children of the wicked one." "He that is born of God doth not commit sin:" "he that committeth sin is of the devil;" and "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Can men be at the same time the children of God and the children of the devil? Can they sustain at once two opposite characters and relations? What becomes, then, of your hope of future happiness, grounded on the fatherhood of God? His promise of eternal life is made to his children: his children are those who do his will and bear his image; and if you come not under this Divine designation, you are aliens and enemies, and have no right to the inheritance of the sons of God. To all the workers of iniquity, who presume upon the relation they sustain to God for final acceptance with him, the answer shall be: "Depart from me, for I know you not!"

"But is not the Divine mercy too great to doom human de-

linquents to endless torment? and will not that mercy, after due punishment, admit them to everlasting blessedness?"

Before this question can be answered in the affirmative, it must be proved that the guilt of sin is not infinite, and therefore the sinner does not deserve eternal punishment. This proposition, however, as we shall see hereafter, cannot be established. But, admitting it for the present, what has mercy to do with the release of the sinner, when he has suffered all that he deserves? What is mercy? The pardon of crime—the remission of penalty. But how can crime be pardoned, when it is punished? How can penalty be remitted, when it is inflicted? The two things are incompatible. If all men suffer to the extent of their demerits, the claims of the law are answered, justice demands their release, and mercy has nothing to do with their salvation. Can you cure the man who has already healed himself? Can you rescue him from drowning, who has, by his own exertions, already reached the shore? Can you sentence the felon to ten years' confinement in the penitentiary, and pardon him after the term of his punishment is expired? Can you hang the murderer by the neck till he is dead, and remit the penalty of the law after he is cut down from the gallows? On this scheme, the sinner becomes his own saviour, and is under no obligation to the Divine clemency. Properly speaking, indeed, there is no salvation in the case. Salvation is deliverance from deserved punishment. The sinner that is saved is not punished. The sinner that is punished is not saved. He cannot be both saved and punished. The conditions of the Divine mercy are "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"—not the endurance of punishment. You must perform the conditions, if you would realize the benefit. If unperformed in this world, are they likely to be performed in the next? Is there any probability of reformation in eternity, for those who

have effectually resisted all the arguments and influences of grace brought to bear upon them in time? What follows, then, but the certainty of "the second death"—the eternity of future torment?

"But how can a few sins, committed during a short life, deserve an endless punishment?"

It is not the number of sins, but the intrinsic evil of sin, that constitutes its desert of punishment. One violation of the law incurs the penalty as certainly as a thousand. "He that keepeth the whole law, yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." This is a universal principle of government. You punish the culprit, not for all the evil deeds of his life, but for some single act of injustice or violence. One crime—the crime of a moment—may deprive a man of all that is dear to him on earth, and doom him to perpetual imprisonment or an ignominious death. A solitary infraction of the law incurs the penalty, whatever that penalty may be. A single act of Adam subjected his posterity to an incalculable amount of suffering for many ages. One sin often involves the sinner in a life-long misery; and one sin in this world may incur eternal anguish in the next.

Again: The length of time employed in sinning has nothing to do with the desert of sin. It is the motive of the act that constitutes its moral character, and exposes the agent to punishment. But suppose it were otherwise: suppose there must be some proportion between the duration of the punishment and the duration of the sin; suppose the duration of the punishment were to be measured exactly by the duration of the sin: how would this relieve the case, or make any thing in favor of the limitation of future punishment? As long as a man sins, so long, at least, he deserves to suffer. If he sins as long as he lives, he deserves to suffer as long as he lives. If he sins a thousand years after death, he deserves to suffer a thousand years after death. If he sins for ever, he deserves

to suffer for ever. Now, what reason have you to believe the wicked will ever cease to sin? Will their sufferings restrain and reform them in the world to come? If they suffer in the world to come, their sufferings are penal, not corrective—can have no reformatory effect, and are intended for no such purpose. And does not sinning naturally strengthen the sinful passions, confirm the sinful habits, and constantly increase the difficulty of a return to duty? Is it likely that sinners, left to themselves, will ever become saints? Will the companionship of all “the filthy and abominable” aid the work of reformation? Is there any assurance—any intimation even—that God will interpose for their conversion in hell? Will their so long continuance in rebellion against him entitle them to his pardoning favor and renewing grace? Has he made any promise to change the hearts and reverse the doom of the damned? If he leaves the wicked to their wickedness in the present life, what is to hinder their continuance in wickedness throughout the everlasting future? Does the law make any provision, or the gospel contain any encouragement, respecting the termination of their woe? Is sin a mere disease, and hell the hospital for its cure? Does incorrigible crime cancel the obligation of the criminal? Does the Bible afford any ground of hope that God will ever bring the reprobate up from the bottomless pit, or quench for them the lake that burneth? If he intended such deliverance, would he leave us without the information? Is there a solitary instance recorded in Scripture of the forgiveness and sanctification of a sinner in the other world, or the slightest and obscurest hint that such a case will ever occur? On the contrary, we are taught that the future life will be a state of changeless retribution; that an impassable gulf will be fixed between heaven and hell; that repentance thenceforth will be hopeless, salvation impossible, and “mercy clean gone for ever.” And since wickedness naturally tends to perpetuate and aggravate itself;

and since in hell there can be no corrective or restraining influence, what is left us but the frightful inference that the victims of the eternal vengeance will be ever sinning—the amount of their guilt ever augmenting—the cup of their anguish ever filling, and ever overflowing, and ever filling the faster the more it overflows?

“But how can finite beings contract infinite guilt? and what but infinite guilt can deserve endless punishment?”

The finite nature of man does not render him incapable of infinite guilt. The more insignificant he is, the greater the disparity between him and God; and the greater that disparity, the greater the guilt of disobedience. Let us make this plain: The guilt of an action consists in its being the violation of an obligation; therefore the amount of guilt must be in proportion to the amount of obligation. If a child refuse to obey his playfellow, he contracts no guilt, for he violates no obligation. If he refuse to obey his father, he contracts an amount of guilt equal to his obligation to obey. If the father's claims were a thousand times greater, the guilt of disobedience would be a thousand times greater. What, then, must be the guilt of disobedience to God? The measure of guilt incurred is the amount of obligation violated; and your obligation to God, estimate it as you will, is infinite.

Estimate it by the claims of the Lawgiver. God's claim upon your love is equal to his loveliness, and that is infinite. God's claim upon your homage is equal to his glory, and that is infinite. God's claim upon your service is equal to your dependence, and you depend upon him for all things. God's claims upon you, therefore, must be infinite. And if his claims are infinite, your obligations must be infinite, and the guilt of disobedience must be infinite, and its punishment endless.

Estimate it by the value and importance of the law. The law is valuable and important in proportion to its beneficent

aim and tendency. The aim and tendency of God's law is to promote the endless welfare of the universe. This is an infinite benefit. Therefore the value and importance of the law must be infinite, and your obligation to obey it must be infinite, and the guilt of disobedience must be infinite, and its punishment endless.

Estimate it by the tendency of disobedience to defeat the benevolent ends of the law. The manifest tendency of disobedience is to destroy peace of mind, ruin the noblest work of God, and render man utterly and for ever unhappy. It tends to total and universal selfishness, to total and universal contempt of God and his authority, to the overthrow of all government, and the destruction of all happiness. It spreads like a contagion, and establishes hell wherever it prevails. Disobedience, therefore, is an infinite evil—without correction, will result in infinite mischief to the universe, and defeat all the benevolent ends of the law of God. It follows that the obligation to obedience is infinite, and the guilt of disobedience is infinite, and its punishment endless.

In short, sin deserves eternal punishment, as truly as it deserves any punishment at all; and unless forgiven, must inevitably realize its desert. To deny the eternity of future punishment involves the same absurdities as to deny all punishment; and the denial of all punishment is the acquittal of universal guilt, the license of universal crime, and the sanction of universal anarchy.

“But how can the gospel be glad tidings of great joy unto all people, if some shall be eternally lost?”

It is precisely the sinner's peril that makes the gospel precious. No danger, what need of deliverance? No angry God, no wrath to come, what is there to be saved from? What sense or propriety in proposing to save men from that in which they are not involved, or to which they are not exposed? Who would rejoice in such a proposal? Go and

proclaim peace where discord was never known, and who will rejoice in the proclamation? Go and proclaim liberty where freedom was never invaded, and who will rejoice in the proclamation? Go and proclaim health and plenty where disease and want were never experienced, and who will rejoice in the proclamation? Go and proclaim mercy where no mercy is needed: go and proclaim pardon where no punishment is impending; go and proclaim deliverance where there is nothing to be delivered from; and how can the proclamation awaken any interest, or excite any gladness? But if you bring an announcement of acquittal and release to the criminal condemned and incarcerated, you bring him what he shall value more than gems and gold—what shall fill his heart with ineffable joy and rejoicing.

The gospel is good news, because it comes to deliver men from the evil to which they are exposed—good news to all, because all are exposed to the evil from which it proposes to deliver. If it announces the wrath of God, it is to make his mercy welcome. If it reveals your danger, it is to prompt your escape. If it shows you hell, it is to urge you toward heaven. It is the peril that gives the proffered salvation its interest; and the greater the peril, the greater the joyfulness of the message.

Suppose a messenger should come from the national capital, assemble all our citizens, and say to them: "Rejoice, ye people! I bring you good tidings: Congress has not resolved to burn your city; the president has issued no order for your destruction; you shall all be saved." Who would not call him a madman or a fool? Who would thank him for the announcement of such a salvation? How could it be joyful news to you—the assurance that you are not in danger of an evil which you never apprehended—which you always knew to be impossible? And how can the gospel be joyful news, if the salvation which it announces is a salvation from

nothing? How can it announce any salvation, if there is nothing to be saved from? What need of mercy, if justice requires your exemption from punishment? What room for mercy, if justice gives you a claim to immortal blessedness? What possibility of mercy, if there is no penalty—no threatening—no curse impending?

The gospel offers you deliverance from death eternal. It is good news, because the doom is so dreadful, and the danger so imminent. Though all men should reject the overture, and perish in their sins, the failure of the mercy would not affect the nature of the message, nor mar its benevolent design. Nor does the fact that the gospel contains an announcement of the fatal consequences of its rejection detract at all from the graciousness of its character. The danger gives value and importance to the blessing, and the warning gives force and effect to the invitation. Such is Heaven's merciful design.

A criminal is condemned to death. The government proposes pardon. An officer enters the cell and exclaims, "I bring you good tidings: here are the terms of your release; accept them, and you live; reject them, and you die." But does this last sentence detract from the joyfulness of the message?

The cholera rages in your city. The dead are in every house. The streets are full of funeral processions. Business languishes. Sorrow and dismay pervade the community. An eminent physician arrives, with an infallible remedy, proclaiming, "I bring you joyful tidings: I am sent, by the authorities of my own city, to your relief. I will save all who will submit to my treatment: the remedy is sure; it has been tested a thousand times; but if you refuse my aid, alas for you! you must perish." But does this last sentence detract from the joyfulness of the message?

All men are sinners. All are condemned to death eternal. The gospel offers them salvation. The offer is universal and

impartial. If any reject its overtures, it leaves them still condemned, and justly enhances their condemnation. But their condemnation does not mar the benevolence of the scheme. The gospel is good news, though all should despise its overtures. It is glad tidings of great joy, though all its rejecters must perish.

“But does not the Hebrew *Sheöl* and the Greek *Hades*, usually translated hell, properly mean the grave, or the state of departed souls?”

No matter what the original meaning of the words. The question is, How are they used in Holy Scripture? What meaning was attached to them by Christ and his apostles? This question is easily settled. We need not go to the lexicons.

Take the account of the rich man in hell. Is this hell the grave? Then in the grave a man can see, and hear, and speak. Is it the state of departed souls? Then in the state of departed souls there may be torment, and vain prayer for its alleviation; and this is the terrible truth we aim to prove.

Take this declaration of our Lord: “It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into hell; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Is this hell the grave? Then in the grave there are an undying worm and an unquenchable fire. Is it the state of departed souls? Then in the state of departed souls there are sufferings which justify these appalling metaphors; and we argue for nothing severer in the final doom of the ungodly.

Take this warning to the apostles: “Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” Is this hell the grave? Then in the grave both soul and body may be destroyed. Is it the state of departed souls? Then in the state of departed souls the destruction is total, and the tor-

ment is everlasting; and what more than this have the believers in future punishment ever urged?

It is very certain, therefore, that the words *Sheöl* and *Hades*, as employed in the holy writings, mean something more than the grave, or the state of departed souls—even “the second death,” the death eternal, the conscious everlasting woe of “the soul that sinneth.”

“But how can we credit a doctrine so terrific and overwhelming—a doctrine which shocks our sensibilities, and thrills the soul with horror?”

The question is not, whether the doctrine is gloomy and appalling; but, whether it is taught in the word of God. If found in the Holy Scriptures, it is true, and must be believed; however it may shock the feelings or stagger the imagination. I acknowledge it is terrific and overwhelming; and so was the deluge; and so was the fate of Sodom; and so was the slaughter of the Egyptian first-born; and so was the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the sea; and so was the sudden descent of Korah and his company into the devouring and avenging earth; and so was the destruction of the seventy thousand Israelites, swept away by a single stroke of judgment; and so was the death of a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night, by the blast of an angel's breath; and so was the wrath which came, in its manifold final infliction, upon the chosen people, when the day of their merciful visitation was ended; and so was the overthrow of Nineveh and Babylon, with all their ancient pride and splendor, and the burial of Herculaneum and Pompeii in their fiery tombs;—but the terribleness of the vengeance did not stay the avenging hand! And the coming of the Son of Man will be terrible; and the battle of Armageddon will be terrible; and the final fall of Antichrist will be terrible; and the conflagration of heaven and earth will be terrible; and terrible, beyond all precedent or conception, the doom of undone

and that which influenced all other causes, was *the desperate wickedness of the Gentile heart*. We need not appeal, for proof, to the epistles of Saint Paul, and the testimony of the primitive Christians. The poets, orators, philosophers, and historians of those times have furnished sad descriptions or scandalous evidence of the extreme corruption and degeneracy of the pagan world. Wicked men are naturally opposed to a pure and holy religion, which reproves their vices, and requires their reformation. They hate the mirror that shows them their deformity. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Such were some of the causes which prevented the reception of the gospel in its primitive promulgation. Unquestionably, there were many, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles, who were rationally convinced of its truth and divinity, and more than half persuaded to embrace it openly, but had not the moral courage to meet the tribulations incident to a profession of their faith. They were not willing to grieve or offend their friends, to forfeit their reputation or their estates, to peril their liberty and perhaps their lives, for the sake of the new religion; and therefore they excused themselves from confessing Christ before men, and stood aloof from the companionship of his disciples.

And is not Jesus still a despised and rejected Saviour? We speak not of the heathen world. Are there not many—even in this Christian country—many who frequent our churches, and appear to respect our devotions—who are yet "the enemies of the cross of Christ?" Some—thank God! the number is comparatively small—are avowedly hostile to Christianity. Others, while they profess faith in the gospel,

deny some of its most important doctrines. They believe in a redeemer; but he is not the Messiah of the prophets, nor the Christ of the apostles; neither the "Mighty God," nor the "sacrifice for sin." They trust in an imaginary Saviour, while the real Saviour is "despised and rejected." And what say you of those who remain grossly ignorant of Christianity, while they are favored with such ample facilities for knowing the truth—who wilfully close their eyes against the light, and grope in darkness "amid the blaze of gospel day?" And what of those who imagine themselves Christians because they are not downright infidels—who receive the gospel in theory, but deny it in practice, and allow it no controlling influence over the heart and life? And what of those who deny their native depravity, and the consequent necessity of regeneration: who say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" and know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" who despise the Physician, and reject the remedy, because they are ignorant of the depth and inveteracy of their disease? And what of those who, like Demas, neglect the gospel, "having loved this present world:" who, like the rich young ruler, sorrowfully forsake the Saviour, because they cannot forego the enjoyment of their wealth: who, like the guests in the parable of the marriage supper, make light of the invitation, and go their several ways, "one to his farm, and another to his merchandise?" And what of those who, though they intend not finally to "neglect the great salvation," yet postpone their attention to it for the present, under the fatal delusion that there will be sufficient time and favorable opportunity for the work; and so continually defer the duty,

—— "till wisdom is pushed out of life,
And to the mercy of a moment leave
The vast concerns of an eternal scene!"

Are not all these guilty of the crime alleged? And O, what ingratitude, to despise their best friend, and reject the greatest gift of God! "Many good works," said Jesus to the Jews, "have I showed you from my Father; for which of these do ye stone me?" "Many good works"—many unspeakable mercies—mercies which elicited the wonder of angels, and drew them singing from the skies—mercies which shall one day make heaven and earth vocal with anthems of adoring rapture—O, sinful men, has he showed to you! For which of these do ye despise and reject him? Is it because he loved you when you were his enemies—pitied you when there was no arm to save, and hastened from "the shining courts above" to visit your dreary dungeon of a world, and assumed your dishonored and suffering nature, and bore your sins in his own body on the tree? Is it because he so loved you, that he could not leave you to perish without a remedy, whatever that remedy might cost; because he consented to endure the chastisement of your peace, wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities, made a curse in your stead, pouring out his soul unto death? Is it because he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by his gospel; because he pursued your last enemy into his last entrenchment, and hurled, vanquished and stingless, from his throne of skulls, the tyrant through fear of whom you have been all your lifetime subject to bondage; because he rose, the first-fruits of an immortal harvest, from the fields of death, and ascended on high to lead your way to the many mansions of his Father's house, where he now sits as your intercessor, and whence he shall return to receive his disciples to himself? Is it for this, O blessed Jesus, thou art "despised and rejected of men?" Surely, it is not that he never loved them; not that he has done too little for them; not that there is any thing wrong, or even any thing defective, in the gospel; not that there is one valid objection to the evan-

gelical record, or one argument of infidelity that has not been a thousand times triumphantly refuted; not that Christianity is useless, or unimportant, or can safely be neglected, or comes not with all the sanctions of three worlds to enforce its claims upon the human heart. It is the desperate wickedness of that heart which blinds men to their true interests, and drives them headlong upon ruin. It is the obduracy and perverseness—the invincible love of self and sin—which arms them with contempt of God, and makes them scorn the prof-fers of his mercy, and rouses all their fallen passions in rebellion against his holiness, his wisdom, and his truth. O that ye would give over the controversy, and be reconciled to God!

“See, the suffering God appears!
Jesus weeps: believe his tears!
Mingled with his blood, they cry,
Why will ye for ever die!”

XIX.—THE DOOM OF THE SINNER.

I HAVE been astonished to hear it said, by those who deny the doctrine of the future everlasting punishment of the wicked, that it is not revealed in the Old Hebrew Scriptures. I think it would be easy to show, that if the Old Testament reveals no future hell, it reveals no future heaven—that if it reveals no everlasting punishment, it reveals no everlasting reward. It is as clear, copious, and emphatic in relation to the former as in relation to the latter. Moses and the prophets speak as often of the Divine wrath as of the Divine love—as often of the Divine vengeance as of the Divine mercy; and I hazard nothing in pledging myself to produce text for text, statement for statement, for every promise a threat, for every blessing a curse. What mean the comminations of the Hebrew Scriptures? Are they mere empty words, or oriental exaggerations? Are they less pregnant of significance than their accompanying benedictions?

I know it is often said that the calamities threatened are temporal calamities—that the destruction foretold is the destruction of the body. But suppose we admit the interpretation, and concede to its authors all that they desire: what then? If God is angry with the wicked in time, what shall change his feelings toward them in eternity? If he hates them in this world, what shall make him love them in the next? If in his wrath he destroys them from the earth, how is that wrath ever afterward to be appeased? If they die in

their sins, how are they ever afterward to be purged or pardoned? If their sinfulness remains for ever, must it not render them for ever miserable and hopeless? Can the guilty and polluted be happy? If God drives them out of this world in his anger, whither does he drive them? Out of conscious existence, into cold inanity? To suppose this were equally unphilosophical and unscriptural. Whither, then, does he drive them? To the heaven of the holy? To the companionship of the blessed? Who, then, would not covet such punishment? Who would not pray for such vengeance? Ah, no: it is from the scene of hope to the land of despair. It is from earth to hell!

I am willing to rest the whole argument upon the single text: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."* Here is the penalty of the law. What death is intended? It must be natural death, or spiritual death, or eternal death. There is no other.

Is it natural death? If natural death is the penalty of God's law, then there is no forgiveness, for all are punished. If natural death is the penalty of God's law, then the righteous are punished as well as the wicked, for all men die. If natural death is the penalty of God's law, then infants and animals are treated with as much severity as the most abandoned criminals, for there is no exemption. If natural death is the penalty of God's law, then the penalty is no adequate expression of the importance of the precept, and sustains no proportion to the guilt of transgression; nay, it is an incalculable blessing; for, according to this hypothesis, it releases the soul from suffering, and introduces it into paradise. The death intended, therefore, cannot be natural death.

Is it spiritual death? Spiritual death is sin—a sinful state—a sinful habit. To make spiritual death the punishment of sin, were to make the penalty identical with the transgression—

* Ezekiel xviii. 20.

sin the punishment of sin—spiritual death the punishment of spiritual death. To make spiritual death the penalty of God's law, were to make God the author of sin, for God appoints and executes the penalty. If spiritual death is the death intended, then God threatens the dead with death, and threatens them with death for being dead. The death, therefore, cannot be spiritual death.

And if neither natural nor spiritual death, it must be eternal death. What is eternal death? Annihilation? That were contrary to a thousand scriptures. The word of God treats copiously of the future conscious existence of the wicked. They are to be judged after death, and after death rewarded according to their works. They are to be cast into a furnace of fire, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is quite incompatible with annihilation. There is no more ground for believing that the wicked will be annihilated, than for believing that the righteous will be annihilated. The death with which the sinner is threatened can be nothing else than a state of endless misery—the endless privation of good, and the endless infliction of evil.

As the soul is the natural life of the body, so God is the spiritual life of the soul. As the body lives by its union with the soul, so the soul lives by its union with God. As the disunion in the former case is the death of the body, so the disunion in the latter case is the death of the soul. A conscious and rational existence may remain, with an utter and everlasting estrangement from God, an utter and everlasting privation of his favor, an utter and everlasting exclusion from his kingdom. Even now sinners are "alienated from the life of God," and practically "without God in the world;" and this state perpetuated, and rendered entirely hopeless, and aggravated by penal inflictions inconceivably dreadful, must constitute the essence of death eternal. It is a conscious immortality without a God—a conscious immortality under the

curse of God—an eternal abandonment to agony, and infamy, and despair.

“But if not at death, may not the wicked be annihilated after they shall have received a punishment proportionate to their guilt?”

Let Saint Paul answer: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” Now the destruction is the punishment; therefore it cannot mean annihilation, for annihilation is no punishment. Punishment implies pain; but there is no pain in annihilation. It is the negation of being, and incompatible with pain. That which does not exist, cannot suffer.

Again: If the wicked are punished first, and annihilated afterward, how can the annihilation be the punishment? In that case, their everlasting destruction is an everlasting deliverance from pain—an everlasting impossibility of pain; and, instead of reading as it does, the text should read thus:—“Who shall be saved from punishment by everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

Annihilated after having received a punishment proportionate to their guilt? But who shall determine the amount of their guilt? Who shall say how long a punishment they deserve? To do this, one must be competent to form a correct estimate of sin, in its intrinsic character, and in all its relations and influences. “He must know the relation of sin to the soul, and the whole of those immortal interests which it tends to destroy. He must know the relation of sin to God, and how vast an evil it is to feel and act out enmity to so great, and good, and glorious a lawgiver and ruler. He must know the relation of sin to a world and a universe of intelligent creatures, and its aim and tendency to propagate its own pollution among them, and spread disorder and ruin far and

wide. All this, and more, must any one know, before he can be considered competent to form a right judgment of the whole demerit of sin. For, surely, the demerit of sin must be in proportion to its own intrinsic evil, and its natural aim and tendency to sully the glorious perfections of God, and destroy the blessedness of immortal souls. And the punishment which it requires must be correspondent with this intrinsic malignity of sin, and must be sufficient to counteract its deleterious bearing upon the moral creation, and in the end to turn it from a ruinous to a beneficial result.”* Who, then, among men or angels, who but God himself, can weigh the guilt of sin—can measure the desert of sin—so as to be able to determine the appropriate amount or duration of its punishment? For aught you know, your sins may demand millions on millions of ages in woe—may demand an eternity of intense, unutterable torment!

“But does not the destruction threatened relate to the sin rather than the sinner?”

No: the destruction is threatened as a punishment for sin; but the destruction of sin would be a salvation from sin, instead of a punishment for sin; and to say that God has threatened the sinner with the destruction of his sin, were to say that he has threatened him with a blessing; and the execution of the threat were no vengeance, but an unspeakable mercy.

Again: “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Sin is an act. How can you punish an act, except in the agent? My neighbor threatens my life: will you acquit the man, and incarcerate the threat, or require it to give bonds for good behavior? A riot occurs in your city: will you dismiss the rioters, and fine, whip, or imprison the riot? A man is convicted of larceny, or burglary, or forgery, or perjury, or bigamy, or murder: will you abstract the crime from the criminal,

* Rev. Dr. Woods.

and order the latter released, but send the former to the penitentiary, or banish it from the country, or brand it on the brow, or hang it by the neck? And if the act cannot be separated from the agent for punishment in the present life, how will it be possible in the life to come?

We invariably understand the penalty of human law to be levelled against the person of the offender, not against the abstract offence—against the thief, not the theft—against the murderer, not the murder. Why should we apply a different method of interpretation to the law of God? What saith the text already cited? “The soul that sinneth”—not the sin—“shall die;” and to prevent the possibility of mistake, and give special emphasis to the application, the subject of the punishment is repeated in the pronoun:—“The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.”

“But is not all just punishment disciplinary in its character, and benevolent in its end? Is it not intended for the reformation or improvement of the punished? And if so, how can it be interminable?”

Punishment must not be confounded with discipline. Punishment is inflicted for the support of law, for the preservation of order, for the protection of innocence, for the security of the public. Why do you confine the felon, or shoot the traitor, or hang the assassin? To mend his morals and save his soul? or to prevent his doing further mischief, and deter others from similar crimes?

So in the government of God. Why were the inhabitants of the former world swept away by the deluge? for their own salvation, or for the warning of future generations? Why were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire from heaven? for their immediate translation to paradise, or for an example to them who should afterward live ungodly? Why were the ancient chosen people of God plucked up from the land of Palestine, and scattered as by a whirlwind over

the nations? to teach them the things which belonged to their peace, or to punish their obstinate rejection of the Son of God?

“What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—is the irredeemable loss of the soul a means of salvation? “Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell:”—is the destruction of soul and body in hell the way to reform the sinner? “If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me:”—is this a father’s tender chastisement of his children? “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries:”—is this a description of God’s gracious parental discipline? “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel:”—is this the merciful method by which Heaven reforms the rebel and recalls the alien?

It is not true, then, that reformation—improvement—is the only legitimate end of punishment, or any end at all of punishment. As men may justly be punished through life, for the support of government, and the benefit of society, so, for the vindication of the Divine rule, and the moral good of the universe, sinners may justly be punished throughout an immortal existence.

“But how can these views be reconciled with the revealed goodness of God, and the acknowledged benevolence of his administration?”

Is the punishment of guilt, then, incompatible with goodness? Does the incarceration or execution of the highway-man or the incendiary argue a want of benevolence in the

magistrate? Must the prince, in order to sustain his character as a good ruler, suffer all the rogues, and villains, and desperadoes of his realm to go "unwhipped of justice?" Who does not see that such indulgence to the guilty would be unjust and injurious to the innocent, and therefore inconsistent with a wise benevolence in the administration of law?

You think God is too good to punish you hereafter—to punish you for ever. So reasoned, perhaps, the ungodly in the days of Noah: "God is too good to drown the world; he pities, and will spare; his tender mercies are over all his works;"—but "the flood came, and swept them all away." So reasoned, perhaps, the children of Lot and their profligate neighbors: "God is too good to destroy the city; he is not angry; he is a compassionate father; he loves us notwithstanding our sins;"—but Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." So reasoned, perhaps, the impenitent Jews, to whom Jesus preached the day of vengeance: "God is too good to forsake his chosen people; we have had a long experience of his mercies; he will not abandon the beloved city, and cast us off for ever;"—but the "wrath came upon them to the uttermost," and for sixty generations the queenly Jerusalem has been desolate. So may it fare with our modern despisers of eternal retribution. Such their reasoning, such may be their fate.

You think the goodness of God will prevent your future and endless misery. Why has it not prevented your past and present misery? Is not the argument as good in the one case as the other? Why does the goodness of God permit so much suffering in the present world? Why are cities visited with fire, and flood, and earthquake, and pestilence, and various devastation? Why rings the earth with "lamentation, and mourning, and woe?" How can you reconcile with infinite benevolence "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to?" Collect in your imagination all the evil that men have ever endured, in

humanity;—but who shall presume to make its terribleness a bar to its infliction, or an argument against its probability—with all the amazing facts of history before him, and all the comminations of Holy Scripture ringing in his ears—the dismal knell of reprobate and ruined souls!

I admit that it is shocking to human sensibility; but human sensibility is no rule of the Divine administration—no fit standard by which to determine the punishment of guilt. Human sensibility is not a safe guide even in domestic government; and the father is often obliged to sacrifice the tender emotions of his heart to a painful parental duty. Human sensibility is equally unreliable in the administration of civil and judicial affairs; and if the prince or magistrate should yield all to sympathy, justice would be prostrated, crime would triumph over law, and all the bonds of society would shortly be dissolved. How, then, can a government of mere feeling consist with the welfare of God's great moral empire?

Human feeling is very imperfect; exceedingly limited in its views and aims; regards only the well-being of particular individuals, communities, or classes; and is therefore incapable of any suitable action in relation to the general and permanent good of a kingdom, comprehending uncounted worlds, and destined to endure for ever. O, shall poor, blind, erring, partial, depraved, perverted human feeling arrogate to itself supreme authority, and sit in judgment on the righteous judgments of God, and impiously undertake to revise or repeal the penalty which Heaven has affixed to his eternal law!

Even God himself seems not to be governed by feeling in the execution of law. He takes no pleasure in the death of those he dooms. He punishes because he must—because it is necessary to the support of his throne, and the security of his loyal and happy subjects. He bewails the fate of the

rebellious people, upon whom he is pouring out his judgments. He mourns over incorrigible Ephraim, whom he is about to abandon to his miserable fate. He weeps with human tears over the anticipated doom of Jerusalem, which his own inflexible justice has decreed. He hurls his thunder with a backward hand and an averted face. He takes vengeance upon his foes with a pitying sigh. But compassion cannot carry it over holiness, and justice, and truth. The incurred penalty must be inflicted: the threatened wrath must come. The terribleness of the work makes nothing against its righteousness, nor even against its benevolence; and though it send a tremor through all the worlds of God—bear witness, heaven—it shall be done!

If the feelings of the universal Lord do not control the measures of his moral government, how can our poor sympathies decide what is proper in his dealings with irredeemable delinquents? If his infinite goodness interposes no barrier to the severest penal inflictions, how shall the blind and erring compassion of sinful worms dare to object to his judgments upon incorrigible crime? The taintless purity of the seraph were incapable of determining how, and to what extent, God shall punish the transgressor; and the soaring intellect of the cherub were guilty of a damnable temerity to undertake the task! Hell may complain with its myriads of tormented tongues, and curse the rigors of the justice which it cannot comprehend; but heaven, with choral anthems, as the voice of many waters, shall laud the manifest equity of the eternal retribution; and let not the puling sentiment of earth presume to dissent from the decision!

With all candid inquirers, the question must be allowed to rest upon the simple word of God. The passages are very numerous, both in the Old Testament and in the New, in which the doctrine is taught, either by explicit statement or by obvious implication. They are clear, and copious, and

very definite, and laden with terrible emphasis. If unsophisticated common sense does not find in them the doctrine of an endless and hopeless damnation, I know not what collocation of words could possibly express such an idea. This is the meaning which all reasonable and sincere men, without explanation, actually gather from them. To make them teach any thing else, a figurative and mystical signification must be substituted for the natural and literal. Those who advocate the opposite doctrine are not willing to submit them to popular interpretation without an environment of notes, and comments, and verbal criticisms, and philological disquisitions, and various learned mystifications. Hell everywhere flames along the pages of revelation; and if unseen, it is by those who fear to see!

If there is no future everlasting punishment of the wicked, there is no future everlasting reward for the righteous; for the Bible is equally copious and emphatic in relation to both, and speaks in the same terms and epithets of the duration of each. If there is no future everlasting punishment of the wicked, there is no future everlasting existence of the human soul; for the same modes of expression are applied to the former as are used to denote the latter. If there is no future everlasting punishment of the wicked, there is no certainty that Christ is immortal, and his kingdom imperishable; for the Scriptures speak as often and as emphatically of the interminable pains of hell, as of the interminable dominion of the Messiah. If there is no future everlasting punishment of the wicked, for aught that we can gather from revelation, God himself is not eternal; for the same eternity in the future is ascribed to the life of the Deity and the torments of the damned. If there is no future everlasting punishment of the wicked, the Holy Ghost has spoken in a manner fatally adapted to mislead the human mind on a subject of the utmost importance; and Moses and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles,

could scarcely have preached and written more delusively, had such been their studious and incessant aim !

Those who deny the doctrine cannot escape these conclusions. They evidently feel, as one of their champions honestly admits, that the Scripture testimony upon the subject "is formidably strong." Therefore they resort constantly to the most questionable expedients, and adopt the most absurd methods of interpretation. It is found necessary to distort and pervert much of the word of God. The well-established meaning of terms must be rejected. Many passages must be expunged as interpolations. Others must be explained to mean what no one would ever have thought of, but from the desire of sustaining a favorite theory. And for what? To prove that God is not just; that he does not reward mankind according to their works; that there is no difference between him that serveth the Lord, and him that serveth him not; that to pray or to blaspheme, to be a Judas or a John, is all the same, as far as it concerns our final and eternal state. And why do they wish to prove what is so dishonorable to God and his moral government? To quiet an annoying conscience, that they may sin without remorse? I judge no man; but indications are certainly unfavorable. The tendency of the doctrine is evil: is not its origin also evil? Its abettors are generally corrupt and vicious. There may be exceptions; but they are rare. Generally, if not invariably, the heart is more at fault than the head. Men blind their reason, and stupefy their conscience, that they may believe a lie, and justify their deeds by their faith. It is a fearful thing! If there is a hell, your unbelief cannot quench its flame. If there is wrath to come, your skepticism cannot avert its advent. Your wilful doubts may render you indifferent to the threatenings of the Bible, but cannot falsify them—may harden your hearts, but cannot save your souls. Beware, lest you practice upon yourself a fatal deception! Think not to sin with impunity!

Presume not upon the mercy which you spurn ! “Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains ; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness !”

THE END.



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